



# THE COUNTRY PREACHER

JEFF D. RAY



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# **THE COUNTRY PREACHER**

**JEFF D. RAY**



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*Given by  
Shailer Mathews.*



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To

W. A. POOL, D.D.

A rural pastor from choice—a man who has seen his denomination in his county grow, largely due to his modest leadership, from a few hundred to fifteen thousand—a man who has for nearly half a century lived in one rural community loved, trusted and honored by all his neighbors this little volume is affectionately Dedicated.



## PREFACE

Recently I published a volume on the pastoral office in general under the title "The Highest Office." The kind reception accorded it has led me to wonder if I might not be in a position to render some humble service in writing a little on the more specific and concrete theme, "The Country Preacher." What is herein set down has grown out of experience as a country pastor, a lifelong intimate affectionate association with country preachers, a rather wide observation of country pastorates and a ten years' intensive study of rural pastoral problems.

In the Roman War Councils of his day old Cato had just one speech that he made at every Council meeting, and it was in just three words: "Carthago delenda est" (Carthage must be destroyed). Without his prestige or his ability, but certainly with his depth of conviction and patriotic purpose I have been saying for ten years in councils of sociological and religious workers, I sometimes fear with irritating monotony, "The Country Church must be rehabilitated."

I hear a good deal of talk these days about this man and that being a far-seeing, broad-visioned Christian statesman. I certainly lay no claim to any such prophetic gift, but every day I hear a still small voice saying that our country's future demands the re-enforcement and rehabilitation of our rural churches. For this vital task the country preacher is the key man. Others may help but more than all other human agencies combined the task is his. In the hope, and with the prayer that I may hearten him a little as he faces this crucial task this little book has been written.



# CONTENTS

	Page
I. A Sincere Word of Appreciation .....	11
II. The Primacy of the Country Pastorate	21
III. Some Essentials to an Effective Rural Ministry .....	31
IV. The Rural Church Outlook .....	43
V. Difficulties in Securing Pastors .....	57
VI. The Bright Side of the Country Pastorate .....	67
VII. The Country Preacher and the Ordi- nances .....	79
VIII. The Country Preacher and His Church Program .....	89
IX. A Step in the Right Direction .....	105
X. The Country Preacher and His Material Equipment .....	117



## CHAPTER I

# A SINCERE WORD OF APPRECIATION

Let every word in all the following pages be interpreted in the light of what is said in this chapter. Whatever of adverse criticism of the Country Preacher these chapters may contain, they proceed from the heart of a man, who, up to the hilt, loves, appreciates, sympathizes with and believes in these stalwart evangels of the faith.

In this chapter will be given eight noble characteristics of the country preacher, as the author has seen him in sixty years of rather intimate association. It is not meant that all of them possess all the high qualities herein cited. In fact it is freely admitted that there is not even one to be found possessing them all. Neither is it denied that some of them possess practically none of these virtues. But it is contended that country preachers as a class more than any other group of our citizenship possess, and in their lives illustrate, the noble elements of character hereinafter mentioned.

This chapter is not intended as a fulsome eulogy—a fourth-of-July panegyric of these noble men. It is meant to set down under proper restraint some things about country preachers as a class that every competent judge must admit is true.

1. To begin with then, let us think of his *genuine doctrinal orthodoxy*. Modern history does not furnish



the record of a heresy which had its origin in the bosom of a country preacher. Conservative by nature, he has consistently held and persistently defended the "faith once for all delivered to the saints." Largely a man of two books—the Bible and the book of nature contained in God's big out-of-doors—it has been difficult to persuade him to follow highbrow theological vagaries. If any theological faddist claims that all this is due to his ignorance let it be replied that it is rather due to his first-hand knowledge of the Bible and Nature, the highest channels through which one may learn of God.

2. There may be also mentioned his *high moral standards* both in faith and practice. Whether it applies to his own conduct, the conduct of his church members, or that of his neighbors, he is a martinet—a strict disciplinarian. He is often ridiculed for the rigidity with which he holds to so-called puritanical views in the realm of morals, but indifferent alike to the gibes and sneers of worldly foes and the well-meant remonstrance of sympathetic friends, he has pursued the even tenor of his way, in open opposition to every form of ungodliness. He has had four pet abominations. (1) Sex immorality and all the modern devices that lead up to it; (2) the liquor traffic with all its illegal subterfuges; (3) Sabbath desecration with all its modern camouflages; (4) financial dishonor, whether in dishonest dealing or non-payment of debts. Without making invidious comparisons it is doubtless true that more than any other single class he has played a noble, though non-spectacular, part in stemming these tides of evil. His influence here is felt not only in the rural neighborhoods where he ministers but in cities as well, since they are so largely controlled by people who got their moral standards from him back in the country home whence most of the city builders

came. Eliminate, if it were possible, from our national life the moral influence of the country preacher and you have given it almost a fatal blow.

3. But let us think for a moment of his *unswerving loyalty to altruistic institutions*. His loyalty to his country is truly noteworthy. During the World War there were slackers in the rural districts, but speaking as one who had good opportunity to know the temper of our people during that period the author bears glad testimony to the fact that almost without exception he found our country preachers the loyal and enthusiastic and sacrificial supporters of every call of our government.

But men who go afield in behalf of denominational institutions find in our rural pastors this same spirit of loyalty. It was a common saying with B. H. Carroll that, given a worthy cause, he could always count on the endorsement and backing of the country preachers. Because of his lack of training he is not always efficient in his method of cooperation, but he is nearly always right in his spirit and attitude. When J. B. Gambrell was making his fight—the last and perhaps most notable and far reaching battle of his life—against the disintegrating so-called Inter-Church Movement, and in behalf of denominational independence and autonomy, he found that in many cases men at the centres even in his own denomination were inclined to yield to the specious arguments of federation and unionism. It was in his scantily furnished room—in the Seminary dormitory, which room he used for both bedroom and office—that we were discussing it one day. As he paced the bare floor he said, with what now seems the voice of a prophet, “Our people are not going into this business. Once get the facts out to the plain people and this movement will die. I will pitch

my fight there. I will stake the whole thing on the sanity and loyalty of our country preachers." He did it, and won what practically everybody now sees was a beneficent victory—saving not only his own denomination, but all the rest from the enervating effect of spineless disintegration.

4. But another outstanding thing about the country preacher is his *sacrificial consecration*. Some of us whose churches or denominational positions pay sufficient salaries to make it possible for us to live in reasonable comfort without secular calling, sometimes misunderstand the country preacher who both farms and preaches. If he is farming to make money, he deserves our reproach, but in most cases this is not the fact. In most cases he is farming, not to make money, but to make a meagre living for his loved ones while he preaches the gospel to weak, poor, poorly developed and often parsimonious country churches. It is doubtless true that in most, if not in all cases, if he would cut loose from the farm, and with a sublime faith throw himself for support upon the churches where he ministers he would receive a better living than he now gets out of the two callings. It is also true that he would do better work. It is perhaps true, as someone has said, that he does enough farming to spoil his preaching and enough preaching to spoil his farming. Let there be no low note sounded here. It is still true, and will always be true that in this country any man called of God to preach with average ability, average training, and average consecration, will get an average living out of the ministry if he will give his whole time to it. It is also true, and will always be true, that God's purpose in this matter is that the man who preaches the gospel shall live of the gospel.

But granting that many of our country pastors are wrong—are doing an injustice both to themselves and to the churches in trying to make it easy on the churches by making a living for themselves while they preach for little or nothing, the fact still obtains that there is no class among us, at home or in the foreign fields, preaching the gospel at a greater sacrifice than the typical country preacher. Personally the author has never had any other calling—not even casually nor incidentally—but that of a preacher, and yet as he compares his life to that of a multitude of farmer-preachers he is conscious that in the vital matter of heart-consecration and real sacrifice in order to preach many of these much berated farmer-preachers have him badly discounted.

I wish all our country preachers would quit farming and “give themselves wholly to the ministry of the Word and prayer,” trusting God to keep his promise and provide a living for them. I believe they ought to do it, though many of them cannot be led to do it. But I wish here to record my sincere conviction that for heart consecration to and real sacrifice for the work of preaching, the typical country preacher is not surpassed by any of his brethren.

5. Another high mark of the country preacher is his *persistence in the face of discouragements, and open opposition*. He reads in the county paper reports of the large Sunday school, the progressive young people's organization, and the active women's societies in the church at the county site. He knows that all those things are good for the community and wishes his churches might have them. After long meditation he determines to lead his church or churches (usually four, often five, and sometimes six) into these various lines

of worthy activity, and goes in for it with all his soul. But an unequipped building, bad roads, scattered people, small and inefficient membership in his church, and a more fatal lack of vision and leadership among them, or his own brief time on the field (usually two days out of each month) all conspire to make his effort a dismal failure. Petty neighborhood jealousies and petty denominational prejudices generate an opposition to his work, and often to him personally. But with a sublime purpose and faith and courage he plods on, doing the best he can with his scant equipment and his meagre opportunity in spite of the indifference of friends and opposition of foes. His neighbor at the county site is occasionally heartened by the visit of some denominational representative—an expert in some line of the work, but it is only once in a life-time that such a man can visit an open country church. The inspirational or deliberative conventions of his people meet. The church in the neighboring town raises the money and sends the pastor to these inspiring meetings. But the country church does not send her pastor, and the country pastor is unable to send himself. Thus the country pastor grinds on in his monotonous tread-mill without the inspiration of such gatherings. But thank God he does grind on. If it gets too hard in one church or group of churches, he will try another, but writing a spectacular magazine article on, "Why I Quit the Ministry," never occurs to him. He is so thoroughly imbued with Paul's "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" that he never thinks of quitting. Obstacles may confront him, discouragements may envelope him, enemies may assail him, but his call to preach is so clear, and his conceptions of God's chastisements for disobedience so vivid that he would as soon consider giving up his life as quitting the ministry.

6. Let us think next of his *breadth in spite of narrowing environment*. The average country preacher is broad without being flattened out till he is thin. The superficial talk that one denomination is just as good as another did not originate with, nor is it propagated by the country preacher of any denomination. But while he is an intense denominationalist he is not narrow. The individualistic atmosphere of the open country life leads him to stand "four square to every wind that blows" for his own rights, and makes him keen to propagate his own beliefs, but without a semblance of mental reservation he accords that right to all others. He would fight as valiantly to guarantee it to them as to himself.

But I speak of his breadth not simply in the matter of denominational adjustment but in the matter of his world vision. Confessedly there is that in the isolation and individualism of rural life that tends to a narrowness of view when the great world outside is involved. There is nothing in the nature of the situation to give his people a broad view when it comes to ministering to the great sick world outside of their own bounds. Of course, no farmer ever prayed, "God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife; us four, and no more," but farming is not an occupation in itself conducive to world vision. The result is that the farmer is not inherently concerned to any marked degree with altruistic world movements. The country preacher lives in that atmosphere. The natural tendency would be for him gradually to assume the somewhat provincial attitude of his people. It is not denied that all too many of them yield to that temptation, but as a rule we find him diligently tugging to pull his people up to a higher and a broader view. He has not traveled much, seldom out of his own county possibly, but in spite of all the narrowing in-

fluences about him and the little "pent up Utica" in which he lives, there is something in his soul that responds to the great world's cry of need even to the remotest islands of the sea.

7. But a still further noble mark of the typical country preacher is his *heroic self-renunciation*. The man who becomes a country preacher from choice deliberately dooms himself to the lowest level in the matter of salary, the back bench in religious conventions, and the humblest seat, if he gets any at all, in denominational councils. If the county site preacher gets a salary of from \$2,000 to \$5,000 a year, his perhaps equally capable country neighbor, ten miles away will be lucky if he gets a fourth as much. In my own state and denomination the country preacher is three times as numerous as his town brother, often equals him in ability, and frequently surpasses him in loyalty, but in forty years he has had the privilege of preaching the annual Convention sermon, just one time, and that more than thirty years ago.

The boards directing the various institutions of the Baptist General Convention of Texas are made up of about 200 names. In all these names there is not for 1922 the name of even one man who is pastor of, or a member of an open country church. In the past twenty years 4,000 names have been selected by the Convention to fill these responsible positions. In all that time three country preachers have been chosen.

Take the local association composed of messengers largely from country churches. How rarely is the preacher or layman living in the open country made moderator of his local association, or given any other special mark of confidence or badge of honor by that body of country people? In many respects his judg-

ment is more dependable than that of his town brother, but he rarely sees service when positions of trust are being dispensed.

This fact is not cited to record a complaint or emit a grouch, but simply to state the evident fact that when a man chooses the country pastorate as his life's sphere of activity he deliberately turns his back on whatever joy one may have in filling honorable places in denominational councils. As an evidence of the country preacher's spirit of self-renunciation he has accepted this state of things without complaint. Perhaps the only reference to this matter that my reader ever saw in print is what he is reading now, and the fact is here cited, not by a country preacher, but by a theological professor, one who could not help being born with eyes. When denominational policies are to be outlined and denominational plans projected the country preacher is rarely called into the council chamber. Practically the only time when the trumpet is sounded for him is when his honored and trusted metropolitan brethren have perfected a plan and all hands are needed to "Put it over." This is not said to put a "dark brown taste" in the mouth of the country preacher, nor to incite him with the spirit of bolshevism (which thing I hate), but to put a deserved crown on his head for the loyalty with which he has stood to the guns, making possible every notable triumph of his people without a thought of its emoluments or its honors. He has done it in all the historic past. He will continue to do it in all the prophetic future. He is loyal not for earthly rewards, but for the crown of rejoicing which the righteous Judge shall give him in the last great day.

8. Another vital thing about the country preacher is that without the demagogue's affectation and self-



seeking he is the *sympathetic, appreciative, sincere, warm-hearted, apostle of the plain people*. He knows their foibles, their frailties, their faults, and has the courage to rebuke them both publicly and privately and often has an almost uncanny shrewdness in correcting and reforming them. He knows their problems and lends a brother's skillful hand in solving them. He knows their troubles, their sorrows, their heartaches, and knows how in a non-professional, but tactful way to assuage them. Without his miraculous power to raise the dead, the country preacher has been to many simple rural homes what Elisha was in the home of the Shunammite farmer, long ago. Multitudes of farmers have found that the wholesome influence of the sturdy preacher in the home has far outweighed the expense of building and maintaining a "prophet's chamber" for him.

But knighting him the apostle of the plain people must not lead to the erroneous conclusion that he is an agitator arraying the poor against the rich and fomenting strife between them. Now and then a city preacher loses his head and plays that role, but our brother of the country church is notably free from it. To him, "a man's a man," if he is a man, without reference to the accident of wealth or poverty.

## CHAPTER II

# THE PRIMACY OF THE COUNTRY PASTORATE

The preacher problem is the problem of our churches. If a church is fortunate enough to secure as its pastor a well-trained, well-balanced, unselfish, spirit-filled man all its other problems are easily solved. But if it secures a lop-sided, self-seeking, half-baked, ox-in-a-crockery-house preacher all its other problems are multiplied and intensified.

The church has a multitude of problems—the money problem, the meeting house problem, the young people problem, the social problem, the discipline problem and so on *ad infinitum*. But the one outstanding human problem of the church is the problem of its preacher—how to get him, how to maintain him, the attitude to assume toward him, how to keep him and sometimes (alas, alas!) how to get rid of him.

Next to the presence and power of almighty God the preeminent need of every church is the right sort of man in the pulpit. With this need wisely supplied all other needs will be secured with comparative ease. But a failure here means the ultimate debacle of every good thing already acquired and a certain recession from every worthy goal already attained.

If what we have been saying is true (and certainly no thoughtful person doubts it) two things ought to fol-

low as the night the day. (1) It should make a tremendous appeal to the preacher to be the right sort of man, challenging every chivalrous impulse to so qualify himself and so behave himself that his ministry will build and promote and not destroy or cripple the church to which he ministers. (2) It issues a clarion call to the church to be thoughtful and prayerful in the vital matter of calling the preacher, and unselfish and unprejudiced in assuming the right attitude toward him once he is called.

The prime importance of the country pastorate is shown in the first place by the fact that *country churches need pastors more than others*. For many reasons what has been said about the primacy of the preacher problem is true of the smaller country churches even more than of the larger churches in town and city. In town and city churches the work will go on in some sort of fashion without a pastor, and in spite of an inefficient pastor. But if the country church has no pastor, or is handicapped with an inefficient pastor the work will languish and die.

In the town or city the vacant church will be supplied by more or less efficient and acceptable visiting ministers, and if it has a pastor inefficient in leadership this weakness will be re-enforced by a more or less capable local lay leadership.

But as a rule, if a country church has no pastor it has no preaching. Moreover, if the country pastor is deficient in skill as a leader there is usually no one in the country church capable of supplementing him at this weak point.

It therefore would seem that so far as it concerns human agencies the most important problem confronting us is the supplying of our country churches with steady,

consecutive, trained, skilled pastoral leadership. No one can read the life of Frederick Oberlin and study his work with a group of almost hopeless rural churches in the Vosges Mountains without recognizing the inestimable value to a rural community of a trained consecrated preacher—one who is willing to give, against all odds, years of sacrificial, consecutive, persistent work to the task of combining and directing the scattered, discouraged forces of a backward country community.

But if one is thrilled as he reads the record of the transformation of these backward, backwoods communities by the magic touch and quickening presence of a real man, it only serves to intensify his sense of depression when he turns from that to see in our own fair land hundreds and even thousands of country churches and communities withering into inert desuetude and even noxious decay for the want of some such broad, capable, manly, consecrated, undivided, unselfish leadership.

If you ask why the men who are pastors in these country neighborhoods do not transform them the answer is—they do not have a chance. With our inadequate notions of what a country pastorate means, no man—not even Frederick Oberlin—could exercise any very vital, wholesome, permanent leadership in a church or community. A once-a-month pastorate, an absentee pastor, an annual call (resulting usually in an annual change and often in an annual church fuss) and a pitiful burlesque in the matter of support, all conspire to make real constructive leadership an impossible thing. It cannot be denied that many among our country pastors, because of either a lack of ability or a lack of training, or both, are not capable of the highest type of leadership. But many of them are capable. They

could do it, and would do it if they were not hopelessly handicapped by the tragic conditions in country church practice mentioned above.

In my own thinking, there is nothing more important than that the noble men whom we recognize as Christian statesmen, and set out as religious leaders, should be giving more thought to the matter of conserving the vitality and developing the virility of these rural communities. The surest and shortest road to that worthy end is the road that leads to the right sort of pastors for the country church.

Quoting, with a better motive I trust, the words of Absalom—"If I were a judge (a State Mission Secretary) I should charge one of my numerous assistants with the task of creating a more wholesome atmosphere and a saner policy in the matter of rural pastorates. In the South most of our country people are Baptists, and in Baptist churches the logical leader is the pastor. In view of these two facts I am sure that if I were a Baptist State Mission Secretary I would give a great deal of time and thought and effort to the matter of working out some plan by which I could cooperate intelligently and efficiently with these country churches in securing for themselves the right sort of pastors, and in leading them to assume the right attitude to these pastors in the matter of providing them a reasonable financial support and furnishing them a reasonable equipment for doing their work. I would assign to a sane, rural-minded assistant the one business of looking out here and there a strategically located rural community where we could put on a demonstration of what would happen to a country church under the leadership of a full-time, capable pastor with some equipment in buildings, etc., for carrying on his work. If my worthy assistant found a

church which was anxious to try it and he felt it was a place where a successful and profitable demonstration could be made, but the church was not able, or felt that it was not able, to bear the entire expense of it, I should try to lead my Board to a state of mind that would make them willing to supplement that church for a short time with an amount sufficient to make the experiment possible. I said 'for a short time,' for it will in most cases be a comparatively short time, till that church will discover itself and realize its ability to carry the work on unaided. A few such experiments scattered here and there over a State would by the sheer force of example tremendously quicken all the country churches. Dr. Gambrell had a way of saying 'One demonstration is worth a thousand theories.' One church like that in a county would give a new vision and a new purpose to every country church in the county. The one piece of leaven would soon leaven the whole lump. One such practical demonstration in a county would be worth more than the work of a dozen enlistment secretaries coming out from town with their startling statistics, their perfervid appeals and their untried theories."

Warren H. Wilson, the Rural Secretary of the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), has perhaps given more intelligent, sympathetic, scientific study to the rural church problem than any other man living. He sees the importance and practicability of the thing I am proposing, and is making some effort to put it into practice among his own people.

The trouble with him, especially in the South, is that there are so few rural churches among Presbyterians. If he finds a desirable country Presbyterian church and puts on his demonstration, it is so remote from other Presbyterian churches that the power of it is lost. There

are, to be sure, Baptist and Methodist churches nearby, but denominational lines prevent their seeing the value of the demonstration in its true light. Since, in the South, country people are mostly Baptist, it seems an axiom that if anybody is to do this thing the Baptists must do it. Dr. Hornbeak, so long Presbyterian Mission Secretary in Texas, has been for a good many years saying to me in a semi-jocular way, "I want to make a speech to the Baptist General Convention of Texas on the subject: 'Why Baptists are responsible for the religious condition of country people in Texas.'" He bases his argument, for one thing, upon the fact that Baptists have a larger following in the rural districts than all other denominations combined, and therefore have a greater responsibility. He probably would also say, and it is true whether he says it or not, that the genius both in doctrine and polity of a Baptist church appeals more than that of any other denomination to the conservative, individualistic, democratic, independent rural mind. Any so-called Baptist leader is "dim-eyed and cannot see afar" if he does not realize that his biggest, most vital, most far-reaching task is that of quickening and developing country churches. He is a poor leader who makes up the map of his territorial activity according to railroad tracks. The open country is the source of religious denominational life and power, the town is but its outward sign and symbol; whatever happens at the source will sooner or later develop in the symptom.

The Germans said, "Whatever you want to put into the empire put it in the schools." Paraphrasing a little we would utter a sentiment equally true if we said, "Whatever you want to put into the country church put it in the preacher." Certainly that statement would be measurably true concerning any church, but more decid-

edly so of a country church. The reasons are obvious, and need not here be enumerated.

2. But the primacy of the rural pastor may also be seen in the *possibilities of his field*. The distance between what the average country church is, and what it might become under efficient, consecutive full-time pastoral leadership is immeasurable. There is no group on earth more responsive to unselfish leadership than a country church. One who has never seen it tried can hardly conceive of the rapid growth a country community will make with a wise head to teach them, and a strong hand to guide them. Convince country people that the preacher's motives are religious and unselfish and they will follow him to the end of the road. In Louisiana there is a country church which, in 1922 had 24 members—a little one-room meeting house, fourth time preaching, for which they had never paid more than \$25 per month. A year ago the church called as its pastor a live, vision-seeing man. At once moving onto the field he threw himself with undivided, unselfish ardor into the work of leading the church into nobler things, causing the people to see their vast and hitherto unsuspected powers and possibilities. In one year's time the church has grown from a membership of 24 to 194. At an expense of \$1,800 they have remodeled the one-room building into a modern church workshop with nine separate Sunday-school rooms and with other good equipment for the best Sunday school, and for caring for the social life of the people. From no regular prayer meeting this service now has a weekly attendance of from 75 to 100. Instead of \$25.00 per month they are paying their pastor \$150.00 per month. A complete revolution has come over both the church and the community.



This case is cited (and there are others just as striking) to illustrate the truth of my assertion that there is no place on earth like a country church for quick and gratifying response to capable, consecrated leadership. It goes to show that we ought to "give the more earnest heed" to the question of helping our country churches secure the right sort of pastoral leadership because of the tremendous latent possibilities of these fields, and because of the large way in which they respond to such leadership.

A few days ago I was talking with the superintendent of a Sunday school in a town of some 3,000 population. Thirty years ago that town was receiving from the State Mission Board a supplement to the pastor's salary. It is receiving a larger supplement to-day, and has been thus supplemented practically every year for these thirty years. I am not questioning the wisdom of this supplement, but I am contending that an equal sum wisely expended in a well-chosen, strategic country church would perhaps have resulted in the country church long ago coming to self-support, and becoming a shining illustration to other country churches of what a wise full-time pastorate could accomplish.

3. But the primacy of the rural pastor lies in the further fact of the *wide influence of his work*. Out of these country churches will come ninety per cent of the preachers in the homeland and the missionaries to foreign fields. Forth from these country churches flows a constant stream of young men and women into towns and cities who are to become the leaders of every phase of life in these urban communities. Take from the life of our towns and cities the wholesome influence of country-bred men and women and you will have left a surprisingly small residuum of anything that is worth while.

The country neighborhood is the fountain that feeds the whole stream of civilization. How important then, that denominational leadership shall lay itself out to help these struggling country churches to secure and maintain the right sort of pastors. In view of the crying need for the country pastor, and in view of his wide influence through those who go out from his field to every part of the earth, and in view of the wonderful opportunities he has for moulding these world-moving lives, it seems to me beyond question that the country preacher is the most vital factor in our American civilization and in the future victories of the church of Jesus Christ.

If the facts justify this conclusion then we cannot evade the corollary conviction that those charged with leadership in the field of religion, and especially those in executive positions owe it to their constituents to give to this question their best thought, that they may set up a definite policy that will bring practical results in this confessedly fruitful field. Many books have been written in the past ten years on rural problems. Those of us who, on account of our positions and the spheres of our influence, are largely more doctrinaires have had our say. We can do no more. We are mere teachers and have no machinery with which to put our carefully wrought plans into practical activity. If anything is to be done in the matter beyond mere theoretical discussion it must be done by or through those charged with executive responsibility in the various denominations. Being, without apology, a Baptist, I yearn to see my own people take hold of this matter in a definite and determined way.

But since the country pastorate is of such prime importance, does it not seem that there ought to be every year groups of trained, capable young preachers, defi-

nitely dedicating themselves to work in country fields? Is it not time that our bright successful rural pastors should cease to regard the country church as a mere station where they are to wait patiently for the call to a town church? It is all a mistake to suppose that a town church offers a better field of service than a country church. The town preacher's influence may, and doubtless will be more extensive, but it is almost certain to be less intensive. He will touch more people but he will not touch any of them so vitally. While the town preacher is touching character here and there with his finger tips, the country preacher has character in his hands moulding it. He is a superficial observer who does not see that while a town or city pastorate gives a field of wider scope, the country pastorate has the tremendous triple advantage of a more immediate response on the part of his people, a more permanent impression made upon them, and a more far-reaching influence, both as to territory and time, going out from them.

## CHAPTER III

# SOME ESSENTIALS TO AN EFFECTIVE RURAL MINISTRY\*

A successful business man, who left the country neighborhood thirty years ago and made a fortune in the city, seeing the title of Dr. Bickler's book, "Solving the Country Church Problem," said: "There are no country church problems; all the problems are in the town churches." He is a type of many long-range observers and superficial thinkers on this subject. Sentimentalists have idealized "The Little Brown Church in the Wild-wood" till many have supposed it to be an elysian field of peace, piety and spiritual power. Many who are writing on country church problems are discussing an idealized memory and not a stubborn fact. They are talking about the country church as they now think it appeared to a boy thirty or forty years ago. They know little, either from experience or first-hand observation, about the complex and perplexing problems of new twentieth century social, economic and educational conditions with which all our country churches are wrestling, and by which many of them are being put out of commission. Still thinking of it in the simplicity of its pioneer life they cannot realize the utter unpreparedness of the average country church to cope with its new problems. They

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\*In this chapter the author has made some rather liberal excerpts from his recent book "The Highest Office."

know only in a vague general way, if they know at all, that the twentieth century has brought to the country church a new Sunday-school problem, a new meeting house problem, a new transportation problem, a new social life problem, a new co-ordination and centralization problem, a new financial problem, a new Sabbath observance problem, a new public school problem, a new agricultural problem, and so on down the line. Because blindness in part has happened to them they think that all the country preacher needs to do is to preach the gospel ("gawspell," some of them call it), make himself agreeable to the people and pass all these problems up to Cæsar for settlement. If the country church does not concern itself with these questions so vital to country life, it will soon find that country life does not concern itself with the church. Good leadership is the one essential human element in the solution of these problems. But leadership is itself the gravest problem confronting the country church. Leadership cannot solve other problems so long as it is itself an unsolved problem.

Far more than the average man realizes the economic, political, educational, social, moral and spiritual future of our country depends upon the country preacher. The fact makes an imperious demand that we give the most earnest heed to the type of men who fill our rural pastorates.

In this chapter I wish to suggest briefly some of the things that seem to me essential to an effective rural ministry. To begin with, some things ought to be said about

### THE MAN HIMSELF

In the first place, then, the very nature of his task will require an exceptionally strong and vigorous body. In

any pastorate the physical weakling is sadly handicapped, but most of all the rural pastor. A scattered congregation, bad roads and rigorous weather will make proper pastoral work difficult, if not impossible, for any but the man of strong physical constitution. Besides this, the rural pastor, more than his city colleague, will find it to his advantage if he is able to match strength with his vigorous neighbor in manly sports. Physical prowess commands a higher premium among rural than among urban people, and anything that will elicit the respect of his neighbors is of value to the preacher.

But in the second place the present day does, and the future will, more and more demand that the country preacher shall be an educated man. Pastoral leadership in the country church is often sadly handicapped because the preacher is so poorly educated. The preacher must be educated if he is to be the capable leader of a free and intelligent people. Every school house adds one more argument for the necessity of an educated ministry. Every patriotic man rejoices in the efforts which the States of the South are making in educational matters. By generous appropriations from state treasuries "the little red school house" is springing up everywhere and state universities for broad culture, and state colleges for specific professional training are in easy reach of the masses. Add to this the many private schools and the multitude of denominational schools of all grades and it is easy to see how the general average of intelligence is far higher than it was fifty years ago. The thoughtful man must at once conclude that if the preacher is to fulfil his God-appointed mission to this better educated people he must himself be better educated. Dr. Boyce was right when he contended fifty

years ago for a better educated ministry, but if there was one reason for it fifty years ago, there are ten reasons for it now. But there is another reason for training among country preachers. I refer to the change in the character of our population, and especially our country population. Fifty years ago the rural population of the South was homogeneous. Our people had in a large degree the same traditions, the same early training, the same ambitions, the same language, the same ideals socially, politically and religiously. But to-day, particularly in the Southwest, our rural population is made up of people with traditions, ambitions, languages and ideals imported from every quarter of the globe—as widely divergent in intellectual, political and moral thinking as in geographical origin. Fifty years ago it required the maximum of skill on the part of the preacher to be a leader of the homogeneous rural population of the South. To-day the preacher who is to fill the God-appointed sphere of spiritual leader must be equipped with the best possible training to meet and overcome the multitude of divergent, crude and heretical notions that have been imported from everywhere. Every new consolidated school and every farmer's son or daughter going to college make a new demand that our rural preachers shall be educated men. I stand with uncovered head in the presence of the mighty work done by uneducated country preachers in the romantic history of our country, but we may all well realize that we have come to a new day. The constantly increasing intelligence of our rural population due to the telephone, the automobile, the good roads, the rural free delivery of mail, the consolidated school and the easy access to college all conspire to make it practically impossible for the uneducated preacher to exercise his function of leader

to a rural people. An educated rural pastorate has always been a thing much to be desired. It is fast becoming, if it has not already become, a thing absolutely essential to his even approximately effective service.

For a third thing, the preacher who is to successfully lead our country churches must be a man unquestionably orthodox in his doctrinal teaching. Personally I think this is a consummation devoutly to be wished in every preacher. But since the country church gives more thought and attention to such things than the busy, religiously superficial city church, it follows that the country preacher who develops a flaw at this point will find his power of leadership more speedily and hopelessly discounted than will his brother of the city church. As a rule it is psychologically impossible for a preacher to lead a country church in any worthy undertaking, if there is the slightest suspicion attaching to his loyalty to what we call the fundamentals of the faith. A preacher with a taint in his orthodoxy may be able to lead a city church in certain lines of worthy achievement, but in a country church he is a hopeless failure. A city congregation may be too busy to see such things, or too religiously superficial to care, but the country church, more thoughtful and possibly more conscientious, will see it and will care. It therefore matters not what noble things such a pastor proposes, the people will not follow.

While it is true that the twentieth century effective country preacher must be a progressive man in his ideas, his ideals and his program, his progressiveness must be marked by a sane conservatism.

More than his neighbor in the city, the country pastor with progressive programs clamoring everywhere in his



gray matter must learn to labor and to wait. His progressive spirit must be so seasoned with genuine conservatism as to save him from the folly of putting over half-baked programs, or planting perfect plans in unprepared soil. The country community is inherently ultra-conservative, and no hare-brained, impulsive, impatient, get-there-quick preacher will be able to lead it. Whoever would be an effective pastoral leader in a country community must learn the meaning of the scripture phrase, "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." Many, if not most of our progressive country church programs have failed because the preacher had not thoroughly learned this lesson. There may be an Aladdin's lamp for the sudden achievement of some things, but there is none for the making of a progressive country church.

While agreeing with you that the highest essentials for every preacher are his moral and spiritual equipment, I shall not discuss them here since they belong to all preachers alike, and my task is to discuss specifically some qualities peculiar to an effective rural ministry.

Now, let us turn from the man himself as an essential element in an effective rural pastorate and show that a second general essential is his right

### ATTITUDE TO HIS TASK

The man who is to do any effective work as a country pastor must thoroughly believe in its tremendous importance, and its essential dignity. No man who belittles his task by speaking of himself or thinking of himself as "just a country preacher" will do a really effective work in a country church. Unless he has the eye to see the tremendous potentialities of his country

field his ministry is robbed of its romance and therefore of its power. Without the power to see the angel in the rough stone, giving nerve and inspiration to his heart, his ministry is necessarily "stale, flat and unprofitable."

The average country pastor is a man of genuine piety, sincere purpose, unquestioned doctrinal orthodoxy and notably sacrificial life. The trouble with many, if not most of them, is that they are restless and dissatisfied because they have not eyes to see the thrilling possibilities of a country pastorate. The average country preacher sees in his pastorate a group of commonplace farmers and their more commonplace children, not realizing that out of these apparently commonplace groups are to come ninety per cent of the men and women who are to be the leaders in shaping the world's thinking and activity. Nor does he seem to see that more than any man in the world the country pastor has a chance to mould the lives of the young people coming under his influence. Because of its intensiveness the influence of a country preacher with one hundred in his church is greater in the matter of character building than that of the town preacher with a thousand. A pioneer preacher passed a boy splitting rails in an open forest, and did not uncover his head because he could not foresee Abraham Lincoln. A preacher met a boy riding barebacked a "gotched-eared" old mare taking a sack of corn to the pioneer mill to get meal for the family the coming week, and had no thrill because he could not realize the possibilities of Henry Clay. A rural preacher passed the log cabin in East Texas where lived the Lovett family and saw a boy nailing a coon skin to the outer wall of the cabin. He said, "Howdy, Bobby," and rode on, not knowing that he had greeted the future president

of the Union Pacific Railroad. So every country preacher has had the opportunity of touching the life of some "mute inglorious Milton" whose life and character he may shape for conquest in the world's big tasks.

But once more, he must not only believe in his work, but he must love it. No man can be the most effective country pastor who, other things being equal, would rather live in town than in the country. Paul, city-bred, loving the city, and thinking and talking in city terms, could not have done his best in a country church, and the rural-minded John the Baptist, had he lived, would have been a misfit as pastor of the First Church at Jerusalem. Conscience, or circumstances, sometimes impels a country-loving preacher into a city pastorate, and vice versa, but it goes without saying that, by and large, a preacher will do the best work in an environment and an atmosphere that he loves.

If the country preacher's heart is not loyal to rural interests he cannot succeed though he have the tongue of men and of angels. If he does not love country people and cannot fall easily and joyfully into their domestic and social customs he cannot lead them. If cows and pigs and birds and bees and fresh ploughed land and growing crops and deep woods and running streams and the rattle of the farm wagon on the rocky road and the meadow's fragrant breath do not fascinate him he ought to move back to town. He can never lead a rural-minded people. And he is constitutionally unfitted for rural leadership if he is unwilling to live in the country where his work is. He may get along fairly well against the handicap of living in town if the conditions make it necessary. But the rural pastor who lives in town because he does not like to live in the country is a failure by inherent maladjustment.

## CONSECRATION TO HIS TASK

A third general essential quality of an effective rural minister is the whole-hearted consecration which he is willing, or perhaps I ought to say able to give to his work. The typical fourth-time pastorate, so common among our country churches, is an infallible preventive of a successful ministry. It is true that our present tendency to organize a weak little church in the corner of every man's field makes a situation where the church cannot support a full-time pastor, and also makes a situation too limited in membership and circumscribed in field to appeal to a big-brained man as a place where he can contentedly put in all his time. In the matter of the consolidated rural schools, are not the children of this world setting a good example to the children of light? Whether from the standpoint of principle or of policy, I take no stock in the idea of amalgamating all the denominations of a given community into one creedless, and, therefore, spineless, and, therefore, useless federated or union church. Such a course seems to me wrong in principle and impracticable in policy. I think the experiments tried along this line have led outstanding students of this question, notably Dr. Warren H. Wilson, to take the same view. But where there are three or four churches of the same denomination within three or four miles of a consolidated school, all of them within the territory that feeds that school, it would seem to be both right and practicable for these little churches to disband and form one strong church at the community center, thus giving financial strength to support a full-time pastor and to secure reasonable equipment for the work of a twentieth century church, and at the same

time afford a constituency numerous enough to appeal to a capable, wide-awake man.

But the most effective rural ministry not only demands a full-time pastorate, that is, one that has its preacher every Sunday; it also demands that this every-Sunday preacher should live on the field. He may be a preacher, but he cannot be a pastor otherwise. I have in mind a little community with three church organizations, each having preaching once a month. One pastor (so called by courtesy) lives thirty miles east; one forty miles south, and the third a hundred miles north. Funerals and marriages are conducted—often butchered—by some secularizing local preacher. The sick know almost nothing of the comfort of a pastoral visit. The wayward go from bad to worse for want of the restraining touch of a wise pastor. Petty neighborhood bickerings develop feuds which could have been healed in their incipency under the influence of a faithful pastor. Mormonism and Russellism send in their emissaries and many fall victims to these errors who could have been saved with a capable pastor in the field. The further tragedy is that these ministers are usually mere figure-heads in the communities where they live. When will our people learn that a flock of sheep needs a Shepherd more than two days out of a month?

A fourth thing that ought to be said is that the effective rural pastorate not only calls for full-time preaching and full-time on the field, but it demands full-time on the job. Often to speak of a church that has preaching every Sunday, and the preacher on the field as a full-time pastorate is a misnomer, because in many—surprisingly many, alarmingly many—cases the preacher is not on his real job half the time. Many

preachers known to me do not work at anything half the time, and among those who are apparently busy in pastoral activity, many are frittering away their time on little, meaningless inconsequentialities, too trifling to appeal to a man with the consciousness of a big job on his hands. I have been a close observer of church life for fifty years, and I can truthfully say that I never knew a preacher, however meager his gifts, who worked, and worked all the time, and worked all the time on his job, who did not succeed, and I never knew one of the other sort who did. Whatever may be said about the enduement of the Holy Spirit for power in service, and nobody believes the doctrine more than I do, I cannot help believing that God despises and utterly rejects the man who undertakes to offer that blessed gift as a substitute for hard work. In the ministry, as elsewhere, genius is at yon end of hard work. It will perhaps do no good to say it here, and possibly do no good to say it anywhere, but my observation is that most of our country preachers, though active and industrious men, are working very little at the real job of growing a Christ-honoring, soul-saving, character-building, community-moulding New Testament church. If any man says the same thing is true of the average city pastor he will provoke no controversy with me. The tragedy of nine-tenths of our rural pastorates is that due to crude, unscientific and unscriptural practices in the matter of pastoral relation and support, the preacher must give much of his time to some secular work to keep the wolf from his door. In most cases the fault lies on both sides. If the country pastor would live among his people and as his people, he could live quite as comfortably on one-third of what it takes to support him in town. On the

other side, if the members of any average country church would adopt the sensible, practical and, so far as I see, scriptural plan of paying a tithe to the support of the church, it would provide a fund easily sufficient to make it possible for the pastor to give his undivided time to the moral and spiritual interests of the community.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE RURAL CHURCH OUTLOOK

A careful and sympathetic study of the country church situation produces mingled feelings of joy and sadness, pride and shame, hope and despair. Viewed from one standpoint the situation seems good, conditions improving and the outlook hopeful, but viewed from another set of phenomena the picture is dark and the atmosphere depressing.

It would be crass egotism if I, a superficial student with very limited data, should speak with any claim of expert knowledge on a subject so complicated and so beset with apparently conflicting currents. I shall in this chapter, mention three sets of facts that seem to bear on the subject, being content that each man draw his own conclusions from the facts presented. I shall present (1) Some conditions that are clearly discouraging. (2) Some that might be made assets, but have really become liabilities. (3) Some that are unmistakably encouraging.

### I. SOME CONDITIONS THAT ARE CLEARLY DISCOURAGING

1. *The difficulty of securing, maintaining and retaining on the rural field a trained, efficient, acceptable ministry.* There is a very general expectation that when a young man finishes his education and shows some signs of pastoral efficiency, he will leave the rural for a town or city



pastorate. The average trained, efficient rural pastor regards his country pastorate as a station where he somewhat impatiently awaits a call to a town church, and the sad feature of it is that the average rural church, with fatal self-depreciation and ruinous self-abasement, so regards itself. The result is that in many cases country churches are either experiment stations for school boys in training or hospitals for once successful, but now broken down old preachers or arenas, where ignorant and inefficient men are permitted to "exercise in public," with little hope of getting anywhere or accomplishing anything. There are not only those who do not expect the country church to have an educated preacher, but there are actually those who are obsessed with the erroneous belief that the habit of speaking good English disqualifies a man for a country pastorate. The absence of trained, efficient pastoral leadership and our indifference to it presents a most discouraging outlook for the future of the country church.

2. Another discouraging outlook is *the decadence of spiritual singing in country congregations*. There was a time when country churches had vigorous congregational singing while city and town churches had their singing furnished to them ready made by a choir. To-day the thing is reversed. As a rule more people will be found singing in city than in country churches. Not only is there a decrease in the number of people singing, but there is an appalling degeneration in the type of songs they are singing, and this degeneration is both in the melody and in the words. Little two-step tunes set to silly substitutes for poetry led by an animated jumping jack offer very meagre encouragement for sane people to worship God in song. Denmark literally sang herself in two generations from a state of tragic national

decay into a triumphant successful community life by getting all her people in every public assembly to sing noble patriotic and religious songs. Had our people been taught to sing our great national hymns we should have had, at the beginning of the World War, no occasion to coin the word "slacker." Has some wise man already said, "Let me write a nation's songs and I care not who writes her laws"? If not, let me say it now. If rural churches are to do their best the quality of their songs must be improved and the number of people singing increased.

A third discouraging element is *speculation in farm lands*, resulting in the retired farmer, the absentee landlord, the tenant and the hired man. We may as well make up our minds that in rural life even approximately ideal conditions will never be reached while land speculation exists. At every war council old Cato monotonously reiterated his contention, "Carthage must be destroyed!" So at every session of our legislature there ought to be an apostle of rural life to thunder into legislative ears the doctrine, "Land speculation must be abolished." We may do many things to palliate it and modify it but we will never touch the real seat of this disease until we can get such land laws as will make it easy, or at least practicable, for the man who lives on the land to own it, and laws that will bring about such conditions that the man who is not willing to live on the land and use it cannot afford to own it.

My own opinion is that a graduated land tax such as the bill offered in a recent Texas legislature, would greatly help this situation. This was a bill proposing to tax the landowner in proportion to the value of land in his possession. The object was so to increase the tax on large land holdings that no man could afford to hold

large bodies of land for speculative purposes. Had this bill received from our general citizenship the attention and study which its importance gave its proponents a right to expect I believe there would have been such a popular demand for it that it would now be a law instead of wiggling its pink toes in a legislative scrap heap. Some such legislation will doubtless be proposed in coming sessions of the legislatures of the various states. Now that this vital question has arisen it will never sit down till it is settled, and it will never be settled till it is settled right, and it will never be settled right till some laws are passed making it impossible for selfish plutocrats, whether individuals or corporations, to so monopolize land, that they can fix prices and terms that make home ownership impracticable if not impossible for a large majority of the people who live on the land and eke out a pitiful existence from it.

If a man wants a big tract of land on which he will not live and which he cannot personally use, let him pay a big tax for the luxury. If he can content himself with a piece of land just as large as he can personally use and on which he is willing to live, let him own it at a nominal tax. All economists argue that home ownership is an essential element of the best citizenship. No legislation would contribute as much to home ownership as a law establishing a sane, fair, non-oppressive, graduated land tax.

This is perhaps not the place to discuss it, but the truth is all state revenues ought to be derived from just two things—land and incomes, and the tax should be graduated according to the amount and value of the land and the size of the income. Certainly there would arise under such a law complications that would be difficult to adjust, but what could be more complicated than our

present obsolete, inadequate, unsatisfactory, unequal and almost impossible tax system. When I say that state revenues should be derived from a tax on land and incomes the tradition-bound, political high-brow shakes his sapient head and sagely mutters: "political heresy." And he is right. To-day it is political heresy, but in fifty years or less it will be recognized as sound political economy. My plea is that every preacher and every altruistic layman shall study this question and be prepared to take an intelligent position on it whenever it comes up. Let every man as he approaches the discussion of it be sure that he is not biased by prejudice nor hampered by tradition, nor shackled by selfishness. You may write it down as an axiom that if we are ever to have a rural population of prosperous, happy homeowners, we must have some form of legislation that will remove the lure of land speculation. Why do absentee landlords continue to hold large bodies of land? In normal times the rent does not amount to four per cent on the investment. Why then do they hold it? For speculation pure and simple. They do not expect their profits by raising crops on the land. They expect their profit by raising prices on the land. I am making no fight on the landlord. But if my investigation in rural life has taught me anything it has taught me that our noble rural population will never attain to its highest possibilities while land speculation stands between the industrious farmer and home ownership. Your knowledge of human nature teaches you that this confessedly hurtful speculation in land will never cease till laws are passed that will make it unprofitable.

We are all clamoring now for laws that will prevent the holding of farm products for speculative purposes. Why

not go back to the fountain head and apply that rule to the land that produces these products?

The fourth discouraging element I mention is *the multiplicity of little weak churches of the same denomination*. The evil of the multiplicity of different denominations is found more in villages and larger towns than in the open country. In the South country churches are as a rule either Methodist or Baptist, so they are not as yet troubled much with the competition of different denominations. The country church problem at this point is that churches of the same denomination are put into ruinous competition with themselves. Drive down a stake at many given points in Texas, describe a circle with a three-mile radius, and you include four little churches of the same denomination, all of them so weak they could not hail a bread wagon, and so anæmic they could not cast a shadow. They each have a different man for pastor, who comes once a month, traveling anywhere from fifty to one hundred miles to fill his appointment, receiving little, if any, more than enough pay to cover his traveling expenses and rendering practically no other service than filling his two preaching appointments on Sunday, and as one would expect under such conditions it is usually a "poor preach." These churches are worshipping in unsightly little shacks or perhaps rural school buildings, their congregations are so small as to destroy or prevent enthusiasm and they are too weak to run a Sunday school or render any vital service to the community. Why could not these four churches of the same denomination come together at a central point, organize one church out of the four, build a meeting house, get five acres of land nearby with house for pastor's home and locate a preacher in their midst for full time? Or if individualistic preference or prejudice is so strong

that they cannot come together in one organization, why can they not at least all call the same preacher, locate him in their midst, let him preach once a month at each place and act as pastor for the whole situation?

A fifth discouragement is a *worn-out, slip-shod, inadequate method of taking care of the finances of the rural church*. It would perhaps more accurately describe a large per cent of our country churches if I had said the utter lack of any method of providing for their financial obligations. The result is that many of them owe money that they never expect to pay. Practically all of this is owed to former pastors. About all the average country pastor can be sure of concerning his salary is that part of it he will never get. This does not imply that the individuals composing these churches are personally dishonest. As a rule the rural church member is scrupulously straight in the matter of personal integrity. But he is a rank individualist and cannot see his personal responsibility for the obligations of his church. The pastor was called and promised a definite amount. This individualistic brother pays what he thinks is his share of that amount and straightway concludes that he has no further responsibility about the pastor's salary. The absence of business methods of taking care of church finances is everywhere noticeable and lamentable, but the weakness is strongest in country churches. If a prophet should be raised up who could lead our country churches to even approximately good financial system we might well call him blessed. Till such prophet arises our country churches will droop and languish.

The adoption of a sane, well-rounded, sufficiently elastic budget system directed, illuminated and kept aglow by a capable, conscientious, industrious pastor would work a miracle of increased activity, virility,

spirituality and general efficiency among our country churches. Like Diogenes, I am looking for a man. The man I am looking for and praying for is one who shall prepare a plan and lead a movement that shall utilize the unmeasured financial strength of our multitudinous country churches.

This leads us to a consideration of *the pitifully, and almost universally small salaries paid our country preachers*. But there is something to be said here in defense of the country church. The average country preacher is with his people two days out of a month or 24 days out of a year. Throw in six days for the summer meeting and he is on the field one month out of a year. The thoughtful old farmer is going to think, even if he does not say it, that the pastor who gets \$150.00 for 30 days' time is pretty well paid. The average farmer can't make enough money on the farm to maintain his family in town where everything must be bought, and he feels that he ought not to be asked to do for his preacher what he is unable to do for his own family. If the country pastor would be willing to live among his people and as his people, where he could have his cow and his pigs and his chickens and his truck patch, he could cut the expense of living 50 per cent. If we can ever get enough thoroughly equipped rural-minded preachers willing to do that thing we will have hundreds of full-time country churches. So our difficulty here lies not merely in the small salaries country churches pay, but in the fact that country pastors are not willing to adapt themselves to conditions that will make it possible for them to live comfortably on the salary the country church would pay whole-hearted pastoral service with full-time on the field.

In another chapter of this volume I have given it as my deliberate conviction that among my own people here in Texas for example our State Mission Board ought to set aside at least \$5,000 a year for the next ten years with which to supplement a dozen strategically located country churches so that they might maintain a well-trained, rural-minded pastor for full time on the field. From the standpoint of immediate, local and available results the investment would pay far better than much of the money we are now investing in notably case-hardened towns which have been so long addicted to the board-riding habit that it has become second nature. But I do not advocate it primarily for immediately available results, but as a demonstration to other churches with a full time pastorate, filled by a well-equipped and adequately paid man. This is said not from the standpoint of a rural church enthusiast. It seems to me, and I hope it seems to you, to be well-balanced, denominational statesmanship. If we do not give more specific, intelligent and sustained attention to the development of our country churches, the stream of denominational life and power will go dry at its fountain.

## II. SOME THINGS THAT MIGHT BE MADE ASSETS BUT HAVE REALLY BECOME LIABILITIES

*The first to be mentioned is good roads and the automobile.* A few years ago a few of us hoped that we saw in these modern improvements the salvation of the country churches. We argued that since church going would be made easier and the consolidation of weak churches made practicable the rural churches would be greatly benefited. But the facts have not justified the hope. The automobile and good roads have served to



take people from rather than to the country church. We are all for the automobile and good roads, but if our rural churches are not to be hurt by them, we must find some way to prevent their destroying the solidarity of the local community. In former times of more difficult transportation every man was available for the local interests of the community and on Sunday attended and helped to build the local church, thus at least preserving the solidarity of the country community. Now the automobile owner is under constant temptation to become a sort of religious free lance—a spiritual gad-about, sipping honey, as his whim, or the whim of his family may dictate, from any community within a radius of forty miles. Out of it grows the tendency to dissipate what had been the constructive force of the community. In this dissipation of the units of influence the country church suffers first and perhaps most.

Another thing that some of us thought would help but which looks as if it will really hurt the country church is *improved farming and higher prices for farm products*. We have been saying that a good country church cannot be maintained without successful farming. And that is the truth. But until we can get adjusted to it or pass some laws controlling it, the new prosperity that has come to our farmers brings a menace to both our country churches and our country schools, and in fact to all the interests of the rural community. Take for example a community where these absentee landlords own three-fourths of the tillable land. Heretofore they have been satisfied to rent this land to trustworthy men with families for "third and fourth." These families were reasonably permanent assets in community life. They furnished children for the school and they and their families furnished constituency and material support for the

churches. But improved farm machinery and higher prices have made it more profitable to cultivate the land with hired labor. So the tenant and his family are displaced by the hired man, usually a Negro or a Mexican. Just the other day one of these landlords said to me, "Why should I rent my land for a fourth of the cotton when I can make the crop with hired labor for a fourth of it and get for myself the three-fourths that the tenant has been getting?" Under our generally recognized business principles of "get all you can and keep all you get," nobody can blame the landlord for doing what he will with his own. But when you destroy three-fourths of the homes in the community and replace them with irresponsible, undesirable and often disreputable hired men, you ruin that community commercially, intellectually, socially, spiritually, and I seriously question any man's moral right to do that even if plutocratic land laws do give him the legal right to do it. A reliable business man in a small North Texas town told me recently that within the trade territory of that town at least one hundred and fifty tenants had received notice to vacate as the landlord would cultivate the land next year with hired labor. By our unscientific and non-altruistic land laws we put into the hands of two or three landlords the Ithuriel's spear by which a happy, prosperous, blossoming, fructifying community may be transformed into a mere shekel-producing desert. We have made for ourselves the anomalous condition in which the more a rural community succeeds the worse off it is.

A still further menace in the blessing of progress is that with the new farm machinery, the number of men needed to do the work on the farm is being steadily decreased, thus hurting the country church by reducing its

constituency. This fact is further intensified by the additional fact that whereas in former times much of the machinery and equipment used on the farm were made on the farm itself, they are now made in the cities, thus still further depleting the rural population. In short, every invention and improvement that decreases the number of men necessary to do the work on the farm weakens the rural church by decreasing the number of those directly interested in its maintenance.

Now no sane person laments these improvements in labor-saving machinery, but while rejoicing in them every thoughtful man must see that if we are to maintain our rural church life we must find some way to counteract the menace necessarily implied in the new rural industrial and economic adjustments we are facing. Doubtless these inventions and improvements will help rural life more than they will hurt it, but thoughtful men will see the necessity of adapting the one to the other so as to reduce the hurt to the minimum and raise the help to the maximum.

But let us now spend a moment considering

### III. SOME CONDITIONS CLEARLY ENCOURAGING.

1. *Better living conditions.* No one can compare the many comforts of present-day rural life with the hardships of thirty years ago without feeling that the outlook for every rural institution is greatly improved. Daily mail, the telephone, better roads, better water supply for domestic purposes, better houses, better stock, better clothing, better food, better traveling facilities all conspire to make the outlook for the country church glorious.

2. *Better social conditions.* Thirty years ago drunkenness, gambling, and promiscuous profanity were common in country neighborhoods. To-day they are uncommon and those indulging in them are consciously discounted if not entirely tabooed in social circles. This condition has been brought about largely by the country preacher and makes a congenial atmosphere for future growth.

3. *Better intellectual conditions,* better schools, more generally educated people and a better trained ministry all make a hopeful outlook for the country church.

4. *A revival in the study of rural conditions.* Concurrent with, and even antedating Mr. Roosevelt's Commission for the study of rural conditions, there has been a new interest in country life. The large appropriations by the Federal Government, by the various states and by counties for the maintenance of farm demonstration work and for the promotion of every phase of rural economics, make a wholesome atmosphere for the growing of the right sort of a country church. Here in Texas the army of farm demonstration agents and the scores of other rural workers under the direction of the extension department of our noble A. & M. College, are the rural preacher's potent allies. As such, I pray for them as devoutly as I do for the missionaries on the foreign field. The rural preacher is blind if he does not use and cooperate with them, and they are blind if they do not use and cooperate with him.

5. *A new interest in itself on the part of the country church.* In many places the country churches themselves are seeing visions and dreaming dreams. They are beginning to see their mighty responsibilities and are responding to the call for a more vigorous, spiritual, aggressive, altruistic church life. Churches are study-

ing rural economies as an adjunct to their work and rural economists are studying the churches as an adjunct to theirs in a practical way not known before. Colleges and theological seminaries are putting new emphasis upon country life and are offering courses designed to awaken among young preachers a love for the country pastorate and to qualify them for filling these important positions.

The study of this question develops many shadows but the sunshine is mightier than the shadow. The problem is beset with many cross currents and the student of it is often saddened by the perceptible undertow, but above all this there are evidences, though they be as meagre as Elijah's cloud the size of a man's hand, that indicate that there is coming in, by God's good grace, a tide that shall bear our country churches onward and upward to better and nobler things.

## CHAPTER V

# DIFFICULTIES IN SECURING PASTORS

A lone lamb in a wilderness is not a more pathetic sight than a church in the open country a whole year without a pastor. The tragedy in the kingdom is that most of our country churches are without pastors much of the time. This is not due to any definite wish or pre-meditated plan of theirs. Practically all of them would be glad, and many of them are genuinely anxious, to secure a capable pastor. But they are confronted with obstacles and imbued with weaknesses that make that devoutly to be wished consummation always difficult, often impracticable, and sometimes impossible. In the hope that emphasizing them may help to remove them let us consider in detail some of these difficulties.

1. Isolation. The country church not being on the main line of denominational travel becomes pastorless and finds itself shut off from those ordinary human agencies by which vacant churches are put in touch with prospective pastors. If a town pastorate becomes vacant the fact is immediately published in the denominational paper, and good men—secretaries, college presidents, and other altruistic brethren are quick to suggest this one and that one as good pastoral material. Thus, without seeking it, the town church is furnished with a fairly good list of names of available preachers.

But ordinarily a country church might be without a pastor a year and the fact would not reach the office of the denominational paper, and even when it does the altruistic leading brethren do not seem to "feel moved" to help them in finding a pastor. Now this is not to say that we leading altruistic brethren deliberately discriminate against the country church in dispensing our beneficent aid. (If any brother does not understand the reason for this difference, if he will write me I shall be glad to give him the information privately.) . . . After sober second thought I have decided that since my correspondence is already fairly heavy it might be better to give the information here and now. My dear unsophisticated brother, the reason of this difference is that when the church at the Forks of the Creek is pastorless no preacher writes to these aforesaid leading altruistic brethren asking to be "put in touch" with the church. Different when the First Church at Townville is vacant. Lest this abortive effort at humor should put me in a false light let me hasten to say that in my judgment there is nothing wrong if a preacher under certain conditions, and on rare occasions, asks a brother preacher with whom he is intimate to mention his name to a vacant church with which this brother is acquainted, nor is there anything wrong if the brother preacher complies with the request. The only point I am making is that whatever benefit comes to a church from that sort of help the country church usually does not get it. The contention is that the country church is usually denied most of those human agencies by which vacant church and efficient pastor are brought in touch with each other, and that this fact constitutes one of its difficulties in securing a pastor.

2. But the country church in calling a preacher is confronted with the further difficulty of the *incompetence of much of the available material*.

If the reader thinks this sentence is a critical, non-appreciative attack upon my noble friend, the country preacher, let him read again the first chapter of this volume. Every word of that chapter is here re-affirmed, but it would argue blindness not to see, and dishonesty not to say, that both in the matter of training and in native ability many of the preachers to whom our country churches are shut up for pastors are pitifully incompetent. Not long since an intelligent country layman said to me: "I do not know what our church is going to do for a preacher." When I reminded him of the fact that there were twenty preachers in the county, many of them without work, and asked why his church did not call one of them he said: "It is true we have these twenty preachers. They are all good men, without a stain on their character or an interrogation point after their fidelity. Many of them would be glad to be our pastor, but we have a nine-months tenth grade public school where most of our children graduate, and many of them are sent off to college. Now the fact is that many of our young people are better educated than any of these preachers, and whether it ought to be so or not, it is true that a preacher will have a hard time leading our young people if they regard him as an inferior in the matter of education." That is not the high-brow criticism of a cold-blooded theological professor but the deliberate conclusion of a country layman who was seeing the thing tried every year. Every consolidated school with its ten grades and nine-months' session imperiously demands a better equipped ministry for our country churches. Nobody realizes this fact more than these



same poorly equipped men among our country preachers who are doing their best to hold the situation in spite of the handicap under which they labor, and of which they are more conscious than anybody else. We must get away from the heresy that town churches need educated preachers and country churches do not. Other things being equal, a country church will yield to the touch of a trained preacher quicker and more fruitful response than a town church. Every mark of real refinement and culture the preacher manifests will be appreciated as keenly in the country as in town.

3. A third thing that stands in the way of a country church securing a pastor is the *insufficiency of maintenance offered*.

It is right for us to pray the Lord to thrust laborers into the harvest, but one finds himself almost approving the statement of Jesse Mercer when he declared in the Georgia Baptist Convention that he had about quit making that prayer and had substituted for it the prayer that the Lord would untie the hands of the men he had already called, that they might give full time to the work. This far-visioned prophet saw a hundred years ago that the blight of our country churches would be their parsimony in the matter of pastoral support. In the economy of God human institutions, including the churches he establishes, grow as the result of human leadership. The author joins his brothers of the mystic type in believing that the affairs of a church should be administered by the Holy Spirit, but in a good long experience he has never seen it done except through Spirit-chosen human agency. The Israelites had their pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, but they also had Moses. When you find a church making unusual progress even in the deeper spiritual things you will al-

ways find that God has provided a Moses qualified for leadership. The highest order of leadership is not possible without an undivided mind and definite consecration to the one task. If that is true then the meagre salary paid the average country preacher makes his best leadership impossible. By their present parsimonious program our country churches are cheating themselves. They invest just enough in the pastoral enterprise to keep them poor and miserable, whereas if they would invest more heavily it would make them rich and joyful. The church in Louisiana that paid \$25.00 per month for absentee fourth-time pastoral service found collecting the pastor's salary an excruciating and almost hopeless task, and found that in all church activities they were so poor they had to lean against the fence twice to cast a shadow. But with a full-time man-on-the-job pastorate they found the \$150.00 per month easier to collect than the \$25.00 per month had been and found themselves growing strong and vigorous and joyous in every department of church work.

Our country churches may as well make up their minds that they are never going to have any joyful, satisfying, permanent growth till they find a pastor qualified for leadership and untie his hands that he may lead. When Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead he not only said "Let him go," but he also said "Loose him." It is blind folly for our churches to expect a pastor to do much going in the matter of leadership when they refuse to "loose him" that he may go. In this complicated modern life effective leadership is impossible to a pastor whose hands are tied to a plow or a jack-plane, or a public school text-book five days in the week. He might not be a good leader if his hands were loosed. He cannot be a good leader with his hands tied.

Pastors are human beings and we may therefore expect them to act like human beings. If they do thus act we may expect them to accept pastorates that offer a support for their families while they give themselves to the church and its work rather than accept the call of churches whose parsimony makes giving full-time to the ministry impossible. Preachers being just flesh and blood are not much inclined to accept pastorates where they are required to "make brick without straw." It is true that country people do not handle as much actual money as their town neighbors, and cannot therefore compete with them in the size of salaries paid their preachers, but there is a way by which they can make it possible for the pastors to give full time to the ministry. Since it is to be discussed somewhat in detail in another chapter of this volume we will not go into it here further than to beg that all men not only pray that God will thrust out laborers, but that he will lead his churches to untie the hands of these laborers that they may give full time to the harvest fields into which he thrusts them.

4. A fourth barrier to country churches securing pastors is *inadequacy of equipment*. The normal preacher wants to labor where he can do the greatest good. Other things being equal, he can do the greatest good where he has the best equipment. It is freely admitted that he will often make a mistake in deciding where he can do the greatest good if he allows mere physical equipment to be the dominant thing in his decision. It is easy to see how this preacher could do more good with this church under a tree or a brush arbor than he could do with that one in a good building with every modern equipment. But since I have made that concession the brother that was ready to criticize my position ought to con-

cede that the church that has the best equipment has, for that reason, a better chance to get a good preacher than the one poorly equipped.

If a preacher receives a call to a country church with a good preaching auditorium, modern equipment for a good Sunday school, young people's work, and for the care of the social life of the community and a comfortable home for his family, it will take a tremendous conviction of duty to lead him to decline that call and accept one to a neighboring church that has none of these things. The sum of the whole matter is that, if the church, for any reason, fails to build and equip a workshop, it will be all the more difficult for that church to get a workman. These two things react on each other. Good equipment will attract and stimulate a good pastor. A good pastor will create atmospheres resulting in good equipment.

5. Another thing that hinders the country church in getting a pastor is the *erroneous views held by the average person*. The average person believes that man is somewhat discounted if he lives in the country. Four college girls are talking. One announces gladly that her father is a lawyer, a second with equal pride that hers is a merchant; the third with no less gusto that hers is a banker, the fourth admits with a blush that her father is a farmer. Four college boys are talking. One says with pride, "I live in Dallas," another with zest, "I live in Little Rock"—the third with exhilaration, "I live in Memphis"; and the fourth with confusion and apologies says, "I live in the country."

This point is illustrated in the fact that our word "boor," which now means a rude, ill-bred clownish person at first simply meant a farmer. The same idea is illustrated in our adjective "countrified." This discount-

ing tendency is not confined to town people. How often do we hear men saying, "Oh, I'm just a farmer." The preacher does the same thing. "I am just a country preacher" is often heard in public and private speech. We are never going to be our best till we can eliminate it from the thinking of the people that farming is less honorable than other honest callings, and that preaching to country churches is a sign of inferiority. Everybody knows how difficult it is for a country church to induce a high-class, well-trained, successful preacher to move out to an open country community. Even if he is willing to accept the pastorate of this country church he wants to live in town, and make hasty, monthly or semi-monthly, or weekly visits to the church of which he calls himself pastor. One prime reason why the country church has this difficulty in locating a preacher is that if a hitherto successful preacher accepts a country pastorate, and especially if he moves on the field the people at once conclude that his star is on the wane, and all denominational forces automatically begin to regard him and treat him as a back number. Some men have conviction and character enough to go against a tide like that, but the average man has not. This tendency to discount a man because he is a country preacher makes a psychological atmosphere for our country churches as withering as the hot breath of a Lybian sirocco or an Arabian simoon. There was never a foolish, superficial, erroneous tendency more unjustifiable nor in the long run more harmful. It is high time that thought-molding men and institutions should lay themselves out to correct this foolish notion. Country churches will find it difficult, almost impossible, to get the kind of preacher they long for till we get beyond the place where the country preacher is depreciated in his own thinking and openly dis-

paraged in the thinking and conduct of others. It will be a golden day for our country churches when the time comes, if it ever comes, when the country preacher (character, ability, and usefulness considered) shall be given rank equal to the "metropolitan bishop." He is entitled to it, the welfare of our country churches demands that he should have it, and we write ourselves down a lot of narrow provincialists if we withhold it from him.

6. The difficulty of *securing heartiness and unanimity in making the call*. To begin with, the farmer is even yet, more than other groups, an individualist. He is not as well trained as others in the matter of group action, teamwork, cooperative movement. The result is it is hard to get him, when in a minority in church conference, to yield heartily to the will of the majority.

Another thing making unanimity in the country church call difficult is that here, more than in towns and cities, local neighborhood divisions are permitted to creep into church affairs. It is not uncommon to see rural churches divide on a preacher because two of the leading families divided years ago over a cross fence or some other subject equally foreign to the question of the kind of a preacher this church ought to have. It is common talk in many country churches that if one leading family favors a preacher the other leading family will go against him.

But another barrier to heartiness and unanimity is the difficulty of getting a representative number together to consider the question. This is especially true if the church has been without a pastor for several months, as is usually the case if it is an orthodox country Baptist church. I saw a case of it the other day. A church with several hundred members was trying to call a pastor.

Less than fifty members were present at the conference. Only twenty-eight voted—fifteen for and thirteen against the proposed pastor—about half the members present not voting. Some brother made a motion to reconsider, which motion prevailed. Then they adjourned. Next time they try they will probably be worse confused. How easily churches, and especially country churches, can divide and become dazed over the question of calling a pastor! The annual call (which thing ought to be wholly abandoned) practically guarantees an annual church upheaval. It may not be specifically forbidden in scripture, but it is forbidden inferentially by every scripture that enjoins decency, orderliness and stability in the administration of church affairs. If it is not forbidden in scripture it is certainly forbidden by both human experience and common sense. I know that the indefinite call will sometimes embarrass the church over the question of how to get rid of the preacher, but there is far less danger at that point than there is in giving an annual invitation to every disgruntled element to come in now and embarrass the bone and sinew of the church in the call of a pastor. It is easy enough for even good people to become dissatisfied with the pastor without holding an annual training school for the development of experts in that sphere.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE COUNTRY PASTORATE

For fifty years the country preacher has had a hard time. Just after the Civil War, for reasons too obvious to need discussion here, there set in a great tide from the country to the town and the country community with its church and its preacher felt keenly the loss of many of its brightest and best. When we entered the World War this tide had turned the other way and the drift of population was from the town to the country, and the country community with its church showed signs of quickening and rehabilitation. With the close of the World War the tide was again reversed and we are now experiencing the discouraging drift from country to town. But there is every reason to hope that this unfortunate incidental evil of the war is only temporary, and that in a few years the stream will again be flowing in the right direction. This is not a random off-hand statement in which the wish is father to the thought, but is a sane conclusion based upon the relation of cause and effect. Whenever, all things considered, country life becomes more desirable than town life people are going to move to the country.

There are certain influences at work, many of them as yet hardly noticeable, which must inevitably add to the charm of country life. Silent but irresistible currents have set in that must give the country preeminence



over town whether from the standpoint of personal comfort, dependable, conservative financial gain, wholesome environment, or a field of usefulness. Now what are some of these currents?

1. *Enlargement of horizon.* In the olden days when mail was to be had, at best, only on Saturday afternoon when some member of the family put in the better part of a day going to town it was difficult for the farmer to have a part in the thinking and activities of the wide world—for the simple reason that these thoughts and activities were stale, almost ancient history before the news of them reached him. But now the morning paper is brought to his door every day and he finds himself identified with the throbbing activities of the whole world. When Cleveland was elected president the average farmer waited from seven to thirty days for news of the election. When Harding was elected the progressive farmer took up his telephone or his morning paper and had the results simultaneously with his city neighbor. Keeping thus in touch with things he feels himself no longer a mere pawn to be moved about on the chess board, but one of the players in the game. The preacher will be quick to see how this will add to the charm of a country pastorate.

2. *Increased transportation facilities.* Good roads; interurban trains; automobiles made cheaper, more durable, and more serviceable; the well-bred horse instead of the former scrub pony or "yoke of steers," the low-priced buggy or carriage instead of the farm wagon of former days will conspire to increase the comfort, the profit and the all-around progress of the farmer. In former times, particularly in black land districts, there would be weeks in the rainy season when no vehicle could pass over the roads. Now we are rapidly ap-

proaching the time when all considerable neighborhoods will be connected with graveled or surfaced roads as good in the rain as in the shine. In the memory of men who will read these lines, roads were so rough and teams so sorry that thirty miles a day was counted a good drive. Now with improved stock and better roads seventy-five and even a hundred miles a day is not uncommon; and in the automobile two hundred miles a day is easy. Who can fail to see that these conditions must inevitably mean better times for the farmer, and that better times for the farmer will mean the possibility of better country churches, and that better country churches will mean a happier, a larger, a more useful career for the country preacher.

3. *Increased price of farm products.* In former days a bale of cotton brought from twenty to forty dollars—and the seed rotted in the gin yard. Now a bale of cotton with its seed will bring from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars. The new scheme for the scientific, cooperative marketing of cotton, worked out by Mr. Sapiro and already in successful operation in several Southern States, will make this price staple and dependable, at the same time making the crop “grown and to be grown” an acceptable collateral at bank.

In former years, owing to poor transportation facilities, when there was a big crop of corn in a given section prices fell to almost nothing—so much so that in many instances corn was used for fuel—but now transportation facilities are such that prices of corn will not be governed by the demand in the local neighborhood, but by the demand in the markets of the world. In the matter of perishable fruits and vegetables, time was when a bountiful crop was almost a calamity because the farmer must see much of it rot in garden and or-

chard. But refrigerator cars, rapid transit and intelligent cooperative marketing are working together to assure a stable market for all these perishable products. The day is upon us when the farmer will no longer be called upon, as he has so often in the past, to send a check to supplement the price of a carload of produce in order to pay freight and commission charges. By means of an intelligent, scientific, cooperative system of marketing he will send his produce to that spot somewhere on earth where there is a demand for it and where it will, therefore, bring a living price. And the world has become so small now that that spot will not be so hard to find as when men and information traveled by ox-wagons and sailboats. Our brother, the country pastor, will come in for his share of this new stability and prosperity, and our city cousins will begin to make pilgrimages for permanent possession in this rural land of promise.

4. *Improved farming facilities both for speed and for comfort.* Formerly farm work was nearly all drudgery. Now with improved machinery and new kinds of power much farm work is almost a luxury. Formerly twenty acres to the "hand" was a good undertaking. Now with improved facilities one hundred acres is not uncommon. Then if he cleared ten dollars per acre he made two hundred dollars. Now if he clears ten dollars per acre he makes one thousand dollars.

The first steel plow was made from an old saw in 1837. It is a far cry from the wooden plow of 1836, imperfectly preparing half an acre a day, to the steam plow of 1923, perfectly preparing thirty to forty acres a day, doing the breaking, harrowing and planting simultaneously. The first really practicable reaper was made in 1840, the first thresher in 1850, and the first

steam thresher in 1860. Prior to these dates the world's grain was cut first with a reap hook, later with a scythe, and still later with the cradle. The grain was threshed by placing the heads in a pile and continuously driving cattle or horses over it (hence the Scripture, "muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn"), or by beating it with a flail, and then throwing it with a sort of wooden shovel into the air till the chaff was blown away. The grain was ground between two stones turned, first by hand, then by ox or horse power, then by water power, then by steam, and now by electricity. Would not the twentieth century starve if it had to wait on those primitive processes for its flour?

It has been estimated that the bushel of wheat that in 1830 required three hours of labor for production required in 1896 just ten minutes. A bushel of corn in 1850 required four and a half hours of labor—in 1894 forty-one minutes. A ton of baled hay required in 1860 thirty-five and a half hours—in 1894 eleven and a half hours. In 1899 this improved farm machinery represented in the United States alone several hundred million dollars of human labor. That year the American farmer spent a hundred million dollars for his improved implements, leaving him six hundred millions to the good. And the end is not yet. Will you read a quotation from Dr. Fiske's charming book, "The Challenge of the Country?"

"The most recent publication of a great farm machinery trust entitled 'Three Hundred Years of Power Development,' dismisses electricity as impracticable for farm uses because of its expense; and says of wind power: 'This power at best is unreliable and usually unavailable when most needed.' Yet the writer has discovered a 1,120-acre farm in North Dakota where

electricity is generated by wind, and wind power is stored in electricity at a very slight cost, and it meets many of the mechanical needs of this prosperous farm. So far as known this is the first instance of a *storage-battery electric plant upon a farm, the battery being charged by wind power!* The ingenious older son, now a graduate of the State School of Science, experimented with this plan all through his boyhood and is now securing patent rights to protect his invention. He discovered from the U. S. Weather Bureau reports the mean wind velocity which could be depended upon at Mooreton, N. D., and built his windmill accordingly. An ingenious automatic regulator protects the battery from over-charging. The electricity provides seventy-five lights for house, barn and other farm buildings; power for wheat elevator, all laundry machinery, washing, ironing, centrifugal drying; cream separator and other dairy machinery; electric cook stove, et cetera, in the farm kitchen; electric fans for the summer and bed warmers in the winter; electric pumps for irrigating, and even an electric vulcanizer for repairing auto tires! This is the way one farm boy succeeded in harnessing the fierce prairie winds and compelling them to do his drudgery."

On the point of comfort take, for example, his chores. In the past his first irksome task in coming from the field was to draw thirty buckets of water for his cows, horses, and hogs, from a well thirty to one hundred feet deep. In the future his gasoline engine, costing twenty-five dollars, pumps the water while he unharnesses the team. Then he must "shuck" a hundred ears of corn for his stock. In the future his gasoline engine and patent husker will have the work already done. Then he must milk five or six scrub cows, high jumpers and

hard kickers, to get milk enough for his family. In the future he sits down under the shed by one quiet Jersey and gets milk enough and to spare. Then he must cut enough hard post oak or elm or black-jack wood to last in both "big house" and kitchen till tomorrow night. In the future the gasoline engine has already carved up enough to last through the winter—doing it in one piece of an unoccupied afternoon. Then if he screws up his courage to take a bath before retiring, he will hunt up a washtub, put it in the kitchen, draw him three or four buckets of water from the deep well and then take his bath on the installment plan. In the future he turns the faucet and the little gasoline engine puts the water in the bath tub while he is undressing. Under the old conditions of drudgery and discomfort and scant poverty, who wonders that a young man wanted to leave the farm? Under these new conditions who wonders that he wants to get back to it? And under these conditions may we not expect that our best trained and most successful preachers will rejoice rather than complain if, in the providence of God, it is theirs to minister to a rural field.

5. *An improved public school system.* One of the most cogent objections the rural pastor, and especially the rural pastor's wife, has urged to living among his people has been the inadequate provision for educating his children. The typical country school in former years was a small one-room, one-teacher affair, running three to five months in the year, satisfied with a third-grade teacher, unable to carry the pupils beyond the sixth or seventh grade. But now with the consolidated school, made possible by better roads, public 'bus transportation for the children and a broader vision on the part of patrons, there is, or soon will be, in rural

neighborhoods a reasonably adequate school building, with good teachers, running nine months in the year and carrying pupils through the ordinary eleven grades, with intelligent agricultural experiment work attached. Such a school will be reasonably accessible to every rural child in every moderately populated county in every State in the Union. Make the country public school equal to those in town and you have gone far toward solving the problem of keeping the key men in the country neighborhoods from moving to town. You have, at the same time, removed the chief objection the rural pastor and his wife have to moving on to the country field and giving their lives to its moral and spiritual development.

6. *Rural Self-respect.* With its drudgery largely removed by improved farm machinery and better rural home equipment; with its narrowness of method removed by daily mail, telephone, radio and rapid transportation; with its ignorance removed by a constantly improving system of universal rural public education; with an organized and satisfying rural social life, and with a church that meets the spiritual demands of his nature, the intelligent man will rejoice in, rather than apologize for, the fact that he lives in the country—and the minister will be proud of the fact that he ministers to a rural people. Whenever a man begins to pity himself and apologize for himself he has about reached the bottom. One does not need to go far back into the past to find that condition common, if not almost universal in rural communities. But he has a poor sense of atmosphere who does not realize that this day of self-pity among country people is passing, and that a new day of class self-consciousness and self-respect has dawned.

Ministering to such a people will have an ever-increasing charm for the trained, successful preacher.

7. *Respect in which others hold him.* If the ruralist has gained in a new respect for himself and his calling he has also gained in the new esteem in which others hold him. There are three facts which may be cited as proof of this proposition. (1) Agriculture in the schools. In former days each State had what was claimed to be an agricultural college. It was, as a matter of fact, generally a military institute where rich men's sons had a high, rolling time. Now the agricultural colleges are really training men to be farmers, and many of the best public schools even in the cities are putting in courses in farming. Within a few years every high school will have its course in scientific and practical farming just as it now has its course in higher mathematics. This tendency is giving farming an entree into good society. This will tend to hold the present boy crop on the farm and take to it many recruits from town. (2) The influence of the great magazines. In recent years these magazines have been giving much space to the pleasure and profit and best methods of farming. *The Saturday Evening Post* is perhaps the most widely read journal in this country. Have you noticed how often there is in its columns an attractive article on some phase of agricultural life? (3) The influence of the great book publishers. In the last few years—say since Mr. Roosevelt appointed his Country Life Commission—there have been more books written on rural problems than in the hundred years preceding. Many of these books have been written by outstanding men in various walks of life and have had a wide circulation.



Now, are we right in considering that these three facts indicate that the people in general are coming to give agriculture in their thinking its rightful place of dignity and respectability? Are we not right in the further conclusion that in the future the preacher will regard ministering to a rural people a joyful rather than an irksome task?

The thing that casts a shadow over this optimistic outlook is the fact that our country churches have not kept pace with the general progress in rural life. Industrial country life has come, or is rapidly coming, into the scientific, organized, cooperative life of the twentieth century, while too many country churches have remained static in the old pioneer, individualistic type. Industrially, country people are living in the twentieth century; ecclesiastically, they are living in the middle of the nineteenth.

The basic principles, the Scripture-taught doctrines of the church have not changed, should never change, and if we are wise will never change. But while the constitutional basis, the generic principles, must always be the same, the method of propagating these doctrines and principles may and should change in response to the demand of an ever-changing social mind. These eternal doctrines of the church now and a century ago are the same, but the practical program of the church a century ago must be adapted to twentieth century habits of thought and action. The church program that was entirely adequate a century ago is the acme of inefficiency now.

The republican form of government constitutionally guaranteed to the United States is now just what it was a hundred years ago, but the methods of administering that government by George Washington and by Calvin

Coolidge are very different. Just so the program of the church to-day is very different from that of yesterday. No sane person despises Washington because he never saw a train or a telephone or an electric light. But no sane person has demanded of Coolidge that he shall abandon his train or his electric light or his telephone in order to be a president just like Washington. In this mechanical effort to make them alike we make them unlike. Due to different conditions, the only way Coolidge can be like Washington is not to do the things Washington did in the way he did them. The Latin proverb, "The times change and we change with them," is good or bad according to one's viewpoint. If one is thinking of basic, fundamental, constitutional principles, he is right in maintaining that there should be no change. But if one is thinking of the application of these principles to practical life, he is right in contending that each new generation may, and perhaps should, change. In many country communities if grandfather returned to earth, about the only thing he would recognize would be the old country meeting house and the church's methods of doing business. The talking machine, the riding machine, the plowing machine, the reaping machine, the threshing machine, the daily postman's whistle, would all be strange to him, but when he went to the meeting house he would be at home. The church is still running, or trying to run, on the old program. It would be a tragedy unspeakable if when he went to meeting he did not find the same old Bible and the teaching of its unchangeable doctrines, and the humble practicing of its eternal precepts, but it would be a travesty if he found the church trying to promote these doctrines and precepts by the program of a hundred years ago.

But let it be said that this clinging to the pioneer methods is by no means universal among country churches. Here and there will be found a country church which has provided for itself equipment, and laid out for itself a program, meeting in a large way the demands of the most approved modern methods. May their tribe increase! Generally speaking, country churches are notably satisfying in the tenacity with which they hold and the constancy with which they teach wholesome evangelical truth. There is no plea made here for a modification of this old-time gospel message. The one thing here insisted on is that there should be an advance made in the method of getting that message out to the people.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE COUNTRY PREACHER AND THE ORDINANCES

Because he is usually not as well equipped for administering them as his brother in the town church it seems especially appropriate to say a word intended to help the country preacher in the appropriate and attractive observance of the ordinances of the church.

The two Christian symbolic ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are clearly church ordinances. So far as human authority functions in the matter they are administered by the authority of the church. But the act of administering these ordinances is primarily in the hands of the preacher. In the past many preachers have been so absorbed with the purely controversial side of these ordinances touching the question of mode and subjects that there has been little time for considering other important phases of the work of these silent but eloquent gospel messengers. In recent years the late J. M. Frost has made a notable contribution to the literature of this subject in his two outstanding books, "The Moral Dignity of Baptism" and the "Memorial Supper." In these books he calls the mind away from the old battleground of mode and subjects and seeks to focus attention upon the moral and spiritual significance of the ordinances. Herein he rendered to his own denomination and to Christianity in general a far-reaching service.

It seems to me, however, that another word yet ought to be spoken touching the purely practical question of delicacy and propriety and appropriateness in the act of administering these ordinances. We have, to be sure, lost incalculably in our failure properly to stress the moral and spiritual significance, the symbolic meaning of these ordinances. I wonder if we have not suffered loss greater than we realize on account of the crude, awkward, sometimes offensive, way in which we preachers have performed the act of administering these ordinances.

There is no way of estimating the amount and degree of suffering endured by sensitive people on account of the crass, awkward, and often course way in which thoughtless preachers have administered these beautiful ordinances. I say "beautiful ordinances," for in the hands of an adept nothing is more beautiful than these Christ-given symbols. Properly administered, these ordinances not only afford an unanswerable argument, but they make an almost irresistible appeal for the New Testament order. But, butchered and perverted by needless crudities in administration, they often become a barrier to the soul's response to the Savior. In practically every community there are people whose judgment is convinced, who have stood out against the call of conscience because of the clumsy, unskilful way in which they have usually seen the ordinances administered. Without relaxing an atom of our emphasis upon sound doctrine touching the act, the subject and the doctrinal import of these ordinances, I maintain when we discuss them we ought to put a new emphasis upon the Scripture that requires "all things be done becomingly and in order."

At the risk of being charged with tithing mint, anise and cummin, to the neglect of the weightier matters, let me venture a few practical suggestions as to the manner of administering the ordinances.

Since more than half the rural preachers in the South are, like myself, Baptist, and since, therefore, one of the chief official functions of these men will be the immersion of those who come into their churches, it has seemed to me not inappropriate to make some brotherly suggestions on that important matter.

Let us think for a moment about the place where the ordinance is to be administered. In cities, most towns and even in many rural neighborhoods baptistries are practicable, and should be provided where at all possible. This is especially true in large sections of the Southwest where running streams are not common and where black mud prevails. A running stream with gravel bed and over-hanging trees is God's ideal spot for administering baptism, but a "dirt tank" on a bald prairie of a summer afternoon and in black land, where the mud is about as deep as the water, is the devil's choice place to rob baptism of its beauty and charm. Under such conditions the sensitive preacher who administers it and the sensitive candidate who submits to the ordinance may indeed rejoice in the consciousness of a duty performed, but both will experience a sense of embarrassment and a feeling of protest, perhaps subconsciously, against a performance that so inadequately sets forth the true meaning of the ordinance. Baptizing is one of the prominent functions of a church. Not that it saves, or helps to save anybody's soul, but our Lord considered it of enough importance to include it specifically in his Great Commission. Therefore, the church ought to make such provision that it will be easy for

people to be baptized and the preacher ought to learn to administer baptism so tactfully and attractively that it will be easy for them to become willing to be baptized. What virtue is there in making it unnecessarily hard for people to do right?

A church is only half sound on the doctrine of baptism if it does not provide every possible equipment to give the act of baptism a chance to speak its gospel message under the most satisfying and attractive environment.

In many churches having baptistries the arrangement for "going down into" and "and coming out of the water" is so crude as to make the process both difficult and embarrassing. I have never been greatly disturbed by the "indecent" objection to immersion for baptism, but I do insist that careful attention to the place where it is to be administered will to a great extent disarm the critic who urges this objection. If by the use of a little judgment and by spending a little money the ordinance may be so administered that it will attract rather than repel, why should not the church avail itself of that advantage?

But a word should be spoken also about the method of administering the ordinance. In the first place, the candidates should be given a word of preliminary instruction. The preacher having the experience of often baptizing forgets that those whom he baptizes have the experience but once and therefore do not know how to do nor what to expect. A little observation will easily suggest to a thoughtful pastor the instruction he needs to give. Certainly there should be a reassuring word spoken that there may be no nervousness.

To forestall any manifestation of curiosity or levity it is well also to speak a kind word to the audience, empha-

sizing the meaning of the ordinance—the fact that, to those who practice immersion, it represents a death and burial, and that it is therefore for those who are submitting to it, the most solemn act of their lives. A word kindly spoken on this line will put the entire audience in immediate sympathy with what their neighbors are doing—even those who least agree with the views of the preacher or his church on the subject—and will almost certainly guarantee the most respectful and reverent attitude toward the entire service.

The minister should guard himself against haste or any sign of nervousness. Keeping in mind that he is officiating symbolically at a burial, he should seek to create an atmosphere fitting such an occasion.

Especially should the preacher study fitness in the matter of lowering the body beneath the water. I have suffered torture as I have seen some preachers dash the body under the water and snatch it up suddenly apparently having no appreciation of the tremendously solemn fact that he is then and there enacting the drama of a burial. Let the preacher constantly bear in mind that this is a burial set forth in symbol and in administering the ordinance let every movement, in its deliberateness and solemnity of manner, be appropriate to and consistent with that dominating idea. It was mine to witness a baptism recently which was conducted in such perfect harmony with the spirit and meaning of the ordinance that many of the spectators were moved to tears. I came away thanking God for the preacher who knew how to preach the gospel, as Christ intended it, through this beautiful ordinance. I came away with the further feeling that a baptismal scene such as this would be worth more in promoting the New Testament doctrine of baptism than a whole library of polemics.



Alas! Alas! that the memory of that touching, instructive and beautiful scene should be displaced by the nightmare that haunts me in the form of other baptismal scenes that I can not forget, where the preacher permitted and helped to create an atmosphere of indifference and even of levity and where the ordinance was administered in such a coarse and awkward fashion as to cause the cheek to mantle with shame, and the head to bow with mortification on the part of every sensitive soul, having any just appreciation of the spiritual meaning and moral dignity of the occasion.

But now let us say a word touching the practical matter of the administration of the Lord's Supper.

In the first place, how often should it be observed? There are those who insist that it be observed every Lord's Day and claim scriptural authority for it. These brethren base their position upon Acts 20: 7 where it is said, "Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, etc." That this passage cannot be relied upon to establish the frequency of observing the ordinance is clear from the fact that Acts 2: 46 seems to intimate that for a time at least they did every day just what they are here said to have done on the first day of the week. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup," would seem to intimate that the time was left indeterminate. A good general rule would seem to be that it should occur often enough to be kept vivid, but not so often as to make it commonplace. Among these who hold that the time for observing the ordinance is not fixed by scripture there is wide divergence. Some observe it monthly, some quarterly, some annually, and some, be it sorrowfully admitted, have no systematic plan for it. The result of this last plan or absence of plan, is that there are many

churches and especially rural churches having services only one Sunday in the month, in which the Lord's Supper has not been administered in years and a large per cent of whose members have never partaken of it.

I tested the question with a group of about fifty country and small village pastors recently and found that in a large majority of the churches where they ministered the Lord's Supper had not been observed for a period of time ranging from one to five years. All these churches prided themselves on their soundness in the faith. Perhaps they were, but they were certainly far from sound in practice.

Paul was discussing the faulty methods of administering and a wrong spirit in partaking of the Lord's Supper when he said (1 Cor. 11: 30), "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep." Most scholars seem to insist that this passage refers to physical sickness and death. Granting that it has that application I do not think it would be a case of violent, improper spiritualizing if we let it include also spiritual infirmity and spiritual lethargy. If we read the entire passage carefully I think we may easily see that Paul is insisting that a wrong method of administering and a wrong spirit in partaking of the Lord's Supper so vitiates the ordinance that it loses its tonic power in the spiritual lives of the participants and that they therefore easily drift into moral imbecility (weak) and religious inconsistency (sickly) and spiritual lethargy (sleep). Whatever may be said for or against the soundness of this interpretation of the Scripture before us, no one who has had the opportunity of even limited observation in the matter will deny that an indifferent slovenly non-spiritual attitude toward this ordinance on the part of the church that authorizes it or the preacher who ad-

ministers it does result in spiritual degeneracy. He also knows that the Lord's Supper tactfully, appropriately and spiritually administered not only quickens the spiritual life of the individual but invigorates the church as a whole.

Now by way of some practical suggestions let me say first that by formal vote the church ought to set certain times when it shall be the fixed rule to observe this ordinance. My own choice would favor a quarterly observance. When the set time arrives the preacher ought to make the observance of the ordinance the prominent event of the day, making all other features of the service tributary to it. The songs should be selected with special reference to it, and the sermon should be given entirely to a discussion of some phase of the significance of the ordinance. Having fixed in its calendar the time nothing short of a cyclone ought to induce them to set it aside when the time arrives. For some time preceding the important day the pastor ought to make reference to it in his public services emphasizing its importance and urging the people to prepare their hearts for the occasion and to pray that it may be a means of spiritual uplift to the church. When the preacher delivers a sermon on some subject entirely foreign to the great matter in hand and then having consumed the hour feels himself under the necessity of hurrying through the administration of the ordinance he belittles the occasion and robs it of what might have been its mighty spiritual power.

Passing the bread and wine, so far from being a mere incident in the service of the hour, ought to be the soul mellowing climax toward which everything else in the entire service has been moving. In my own judgment it is a travesty to preach a controversial sermon on this

occasion. The people will need instruction, to be sure, on the question of who should come to the Lord's table, but it seems to me that the sermon on that somewhat controverted point ought to be preached on some other day. I have seen it happen that the preacher in his sermon led his people to discern in the Lord's Supper a subject for debate rather than helping them to discern in it the Lord's body. What I am insisting on here is that the entire setting for the occasion and all the atmospheric conditions should be such as to make it easy for the participants to discern the Lord's body, and thus draw from the solemn symbolic occasion the greatest possible spiritual help.

Now a few words as to the act of dispensing the elements of the Lord's Supper. Every detail should be carefully pre-arranged that the service may proceed without delay or embarrassing complications. I witnessed a communion occasion recently in which the wine was brought to the table in the original bottle. The minister found difficulty in opening it. A deacon volunteered his assistance, and after some labor succeeded in removing the cork with his knife. The service proceeded, but it goes without saying that it limped along without spiritual power. Care should be exercised to see that the bread is properly prepared. More than once I have seen the service marred, if not utterly spoiled, by the fact that the bread was so tough that it could not be broken and had to be torn apart. Those who pass the elements will need some instruction. They should leave the table at the same time and return at the same time. Each should understand what part of the audience he is to serve that there be no pointing or talking or sign-making attracting attention from the ordinance itself. The entire ser-

vice should proceed with a quiet, serious, deliberate dignity, consistent with the solemn scene being symbolized.

The preacher who can not recognize the importance of the things herein discussed is such a pachyderm that, unless something can be found to quicken his sensibilities he will never amount to much as a pastor. Let us pray that our preachers may be so poised in judgment, so sane in conviction, so sensitive in feeling that they will intuitively administer these ordinances with a method and in a spirit worthy of them.

## CHAPTER VIII

# THE COUNTRY PREACHER AND HIS CHURCH PROGRAM

A negro boy had visited his first circus. He took all the other animals seriously, but when he came to the giraffe he broke into a laugh saying, "Dem whut we is been a-seein' is all right, dis here on's a joke. Dey ain't no sich animal as dat." On the average the pickaninny's remark could be justly applied to the program of the country church. As a rule there is no such thing, unless you call a spasmodic, irregular monthly preaching service a program. One preeminent weakness of the average country church is that there has never been thought out for it, nor adopted by it any well-articulated and comprehensive program of what it proposes to be or do. The once-a-month appointment, the absentee pastor and the frequent pastoral change make such a thing exceedingly difficult. Yet even with this triple handicap much improvement could be made. The author is a Baptist, but he freely admits that, under the magnetic and statesman-like leadership of Dr. Warren H. Wilson the Presbyterians (U.S.A.) have set us all a good example in the matter now under discussion.

They have selected here and there strategic country churches, have made it financially possible for them to maintain a full time pastorate, and have collaborated with church and pastor in laying out a worthy and challenging program covering the whole question of the

church in its relation to the local community and the world. One of these country churches was located in the Wallace community, Van Zandt County, Texas. It had for its first full-time pastor, Rev. Millar Burrows. Among the first things the brilliant young pastor did was to work out and get the church to adopt a carefully prepared, constructive, comprehensive progressive program, which church and pastor agreed to regard as the goal to which they would work. This program was printed and a copy placed in the home of every member that all might see just what definite things the church proposed to undertake. In this chapter is included practically a verbatim copy of that entire program. It is reproduced here, not with the idea that any pastor or church would or should slavishly follow it as an absolute model. The belief is, however, unhesitatingly expressed, that it is on the whole looking in the right direction and that it would be a great day if all our country churches should adopt and seriously undertake to carry out some such program. My earnest wish and urgent request is that forward looking country pastors give it careful study. The charm, the romance, the thrill of many of our country pastorates is lost because there is not a fixed program of activity big enough and broad enough and difficult enough to challenge the full strength of church and pastor.

No man can believe more thoroughly than I do that the gospel of Jesus Christ believed and practiced is the one hope of the world—rural and urban for time and for eternity. What I am here urging is not that there shall be less emphasis upon that fundamental fact. Rather, in my soul, I believe that it ought to be emphasized far more than it is. What I am urging upon my brethren in country pastorates is that they give very earnest con-

sideration to the question of finding the best method of getting this saving gospel out to all the people. This gospel is of God, and man adds to it and takes from it at his peril. But methods of presenting this gospel to the people are of men, and every true preacher ought to keep an open mind to any method that will help to get these words of life out to men in the most attractive, winsome, compelling way.

We have no new gospel, but every century has brought a new day in the matter of method in presenting the old gospel. This means that the country preacher while proclaiming the same old gospel must remodel some of his methods of getting that old-time God-given message out to the people. The day has passed when the country preacher has discharged his obligation by the preaching of an emotional, eloquent, evangelically sound or evangelistically earnest sermon. He must do that as well as, and even better than, he ever did it before. But he must not close his eyes to the fact that there are new tides in the rural community, and he must realize that instead of ignoring these tides, or antagonizing them, he must utilize them as one of many methods of getting his glorious gospel to the people.

He is blind who does not see that in recent years there has come a new atmosphere in rural life. The Sociology departments of colleges and universities are busy holding rural life conferences and making suggestions for the organization and promotion of country communities. Now what are we theological conservatives and orthodox religionists going to do about these always altruistic, but sometimes radical and even unscriptural methods of developing a community? We can ignore them and laugh at them and sniff at them and fuss at them and storm at them while the radicals by means of



them take charge of rural communities and high brow sociologists impregnate them with the views of so-called Modernism. On the other hand we can get into this movement with a new interest in rural life and make it contribute a worthy part toward stabilizing and promoting the real things of Christ. It is easy for the ease-loving superficial preacher, choosing the line of least resistance, to roll his eyes heavenward, and say that this is all a new fangled business, and the good old way is good enough for him. But the forward looking man who loves the gospel and is anxious that the people shall be kept true to the faith of the fathers will take a lively interest in this new country life movement and will take a man's part in seeking to utilize the much that is good in it and trying bravely and courageously to neutralize whatever is in it calculated to undermine vital godliness or subvert the teaching of God's Word.

In introducing here the program of the Wallace Church let the reader bear in mind that this is the program of a Presbyterian Church. In it, therefore, there are expressions both in the sphere of theology and of ecclesiology which the author does not, and which many of his readers will not, endorse. The thing here stressed and commended is not doctrine or church polity, but a program and a method.

PROGRAM OF THE WALLACE, TEXAS,  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Adopted by the Congregation and Session  
October 29, 1916.*

A program is not a statement of past or present achievements but of ideals and plans for the future. We have not hesitated, therefore, to include in this program

many things which we are far from having realized in practice, or from being able to put into practice for, perhaps, some time to come. To do any real and permanent good even now, we believe that we must have a clear view of our whole work and of the higher ideals toward which we must always move if we are to fill our place in God's world-program for the establishment of his Kingdom. One point after another, taking up each as we come to it and striving to realize as much as lies within our power at each stage of our progress, we hope and intend, as God gives us grace, to attain all of the points in this program.—(Philippians 3: 12-14.)

### I—WORSHIP

1. *Public Worship*—*Regular morning worship* every Sunday in the year the congregation coming consciously as one body into the presence of God, with

*Prayer* expressing the sentiments of the whole congregation and actively participated in by all with heart and mind;

*Congregational singing* a prominent and beautiful element in the services;

*Reading from the Scriptures* for instruction and inspiration, carefully selected and prepared by the minister and heard with attention and reverence by the congregation;

*Preaching* which presents and interprets the whole counsel of God and applies it to our own individual and social needs in this particular rural community;

*An offering* as a regular and important act of worship every Sunday;

*Observance of special days*, with particular reference to country life;

*Order, dignity and reverence pervading the whole service.*

*Regular Young People's Service* every Sunday night, conducted by the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, and including (except on the third Sunday of each month) a Young People's Sermon by the pastor.

*Quarterly Observance of the Lord's Supper* as the supreme expression of our union with Christ.

*Church Night* every Wednesday night:

A Social Half Hour,

Half an hour for class and committee meetings,

A half-hour Devotional Service in charge of the Adult Division of the Christian Endeavor.

2. *Family Worship*—A *Committee on Religion in the Home* seeking to enroll all of our families in the "Presbyterian Home Circle" and cultivate the regular practice of family worship in the community.

*Training in Worship* for the young. *Care and improvement* of our buildings, grounds and equipment as a part of our worship, being an expression of the value we attach to our religion.

## II—EVANGELISM

*Our Aim*—Seeking nothing less than the full salvation of our whole community, we accept our responsibility not only toward the more settled and successful element of the population which naturally furnishes the chief support of any church, and which only selfishness or misunderstanding can keep out of the church, but also toward the unsettled and the unsuccessful: all who are not living as Sons in the Father's House, whether because of the bondage of specific personal sins, or because of the general discouraging and hindering effect

of misfortune; all who have no settled home and living for themselves and their families, and have not found their rightful place as Christian citizens in the life of the community; and especially the young people upon whom the future of our nation so largely depends. To all these we would bring our Christ and the life we find in him.

*Evangelistic Program—Exaltation of the Christian Life* by preaching, teaching and personal conversation;

By such beautiful, well-kept buildings and grounds, and such up-to-date equipment and methods as will inspire respect for our religion and attract people to it;

By making our whole church work and our personal lives throughout so manifest the fullness of life which is in Christ Jesus that men beholding us may be drawn to him.

*Intercession* for the unsaved in all our prayers, public and private.

*In the Sunday School*—All work so planned and carried out as to give full understanding and appreciation of Christian truth and ideals and lead to personal acceptance of Christ and consecration to the fullest Christian life.

Decision Day once a year, properly prepared for, with special invitation and opportunity for public confession of Christ.

*In the Young People's Society*—Not only Christian training and culture for the young people who are already Christians, but constant endeavor to win those who are not, by:

The exemplification in the Society of a wholesome, attractive type of Christian life for young people;

The use of the Christian Endeavor pledge as a valid and valuable form of public confession for beginning the Christian life;

A Lookout Committee, working along the usual lines of that Committee's work in Christian Endeavor Societies;

Personal work by the members—in the society, in their ordinary social relations, and in connection with the Special Season of Evangelistic Effort.

*A Special Season of Evangelistic Effort*—occupying for the time being the chief attention of the whole church. The fullest possible cooperation of other churches earnestly desired and invited.

Preliminary surveys made by the Permanent Committee, the organized classes of the Sunday school, and the Christian Endeavor, in cooperation one with another and with the representatives or committees of the other church (or churches).

Personal work by the church people, organized for the purpose, preceding and during the season of special services.

Evangelistic services—conducted either by the pastor or by visiting evangelists, as may seem best at the time. Additional services, so far as possible, in nearby school houses, groves, etc., conducted by lay workers and the young people.

*A Permanent Committee on Evangelism*—seeking opportunities to do personal work and foster it in the church throughout the year, supervising all the evangelistic efforts of the church, following up the work of the Special Season, and reporting regularly to the session concerning the need and progress of evangelistic work in the community.

### III—RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*Our Aim*—To give our children, young people and adults instruction and training, so graded and adapted

that each pupil may increasingly effect a Christian adjustment to the particular conditions and problems of his own developing life, in all the relations of the home, the community and the Kingdom of God.

*Educational Program—In the Pulpit.* Sermons presenting not merely emotional exhortation, but material of permanent educational value.

*In the Home*—A committee on religion in the home, organizing and directing the "Presbyterian Home Circle," and seeking to establish in our homes, not only family worship, but also conscientious and systematic religious training, including the use of good religious literature, especially the *Assembly Herald*, the *Presbyterian Advance* and the literature by our various Boards.

*In the Sunday School:*

*Goal*—To become the best country Sunday school in Texas, by increasing efficiency according to the modern ideal of religious education.

In May, 1916, we received the pennant awarded to Sunday schools which have attained the "Ten Point Interdenominational Standard" (Cradle Roll, Home Department, Organized Bible Classes in Secondary and Adult Divisions, Teacher Training, Graded Organization and Instruction, Missionary Instruction and Offering, Temperance Instruction, Definite Decision for Christ Urged, Offering for Denominational Sunday School Workers' Conferences Regularly Held). We are now working toward the "Presbyterian Advance Standard" (A Council of Religious Education, Adequate Building and Equipment, Catechetical Instruction, Missionary Work, Vocational Guidance and Instruction, Officers and Teachers Trained, Systematic Giving, Bible Reading and Church Attendance, Parents' Meeting and Religious Training in the Home, Community Extension Work).

Graded Training in Worship;

Graded Social Service adapted to our situation;

*Evangelism*—Our first concern in the Sunday school is the Christian culture of our own children, who according to the Presbyterian idea are members of the church, and are to be so brought up and trained. Our next responsibility is to those of all ages who have no church homes: these we must seek out, and offer to them the same privileges and opportunities that we give our own members. Thirdly, we extend a cordial welcome to all those of any other church who care to avail themselves of the advantages of our Sunday school.

*In the Young People's Society*—Training in worship and service;

Study classes on methods of Christian work, missions, etc.

*Evangelism:*

*Church Night*—Special study classes connected with the midweek meeting.

*Pastor's Instruction Class*—A class conducted by the pastor and meeting during the week, e. g. after school Friday afternoons, for such part of the school year as may prove advisable. Instruction in the fundamental principles of religion, in preparation for church membership and intelligent participation in the life and work of the church.

*Special Conferences, Institutes, etc.*—Occasional brief seasons of special study along specific lines, with well-qualified visiting speakers and leaders.

*A Council of Religious Education*—A central body, constituted according to the plan recommended by our denominational Department of Religious Education, directing all these varied agencies and coordinating them into an efficient, unified system of Religious Education;

receiving reports from the different organizations, departments and committees, and reporting regularly to the Session.

#### IV—COMMUNITY SERVICE

*Our Aim*—To give “help for every community need”; to furnish “Christian leadership for every occasion and cooperation for every movement which contributes to the betterment of mankind”; to encourage and promote everything which helps to make the “Community a permanent home where no one is poor, strange or dissatisfied; where men are taught to live and work in the country and to support their homes, their institutions and their community; where every generation transmits a richer heritage—in lands and institutions and traditions—than it received; where there is satisfaction in the present and a faith in the future to inspire with a Confidence of Eternal Life.” (From “A Platform for Country Churches,” issued by the Presbyterian Country Church Work).

*Program of Service*—Moral Reform, Temperance, Social Purity, etc.

*Education*—Training for rural life in the public school; lectures, reading circles, clubs, institutes; literature on rural problems and our relation to them; Sunday-school library (over 500 volumes at present).

*Better Farming and Home-making*—Government and college lectures and demonstrators; clubs; a demonstration farm of about five acres belonging to the church and managed by a committee of the session in consultation with the federal demonstration agent and the agricultural college; emphasis in sermons on the religious aspects of farming and home-making.



*Economic Problems*—Land ownership and tenantry; banking and credit, co-operation in production, buying and selling; good roads; lectures, discussions, and (where needed) the organization of clubs or associations.

*Health*—Sanitation, hygiene, care of children; lectures, study, literature.

*Relief of sickness and misfortune*—Visiting; a Local Benevolent Fund administered by the session in accordance with recommendations from the organized Sunday-school classes, the Christian Endeavor or individuals, and raised as a regular item on the budget.

*Recreation*—A playground belonging to the church, with facilities for organized play; athletics; celebration of holidays; provision for social intercourse and enjoyment as a regular part of the Church Night program; music—singing class meeting weekly at the manse; dramatic entertainments, recitations, socials, games, refreshments conducted by the Social Committee of the Young People's Society; all these events and activities conducted not for the church alone, but for the whole community.

*Beautiful homes, grounds, roadsides, etc.*—Education and organized effort according to opportunity and need.

#### OUR POLICY IN ALL THE ABOVE ACTIVITIES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

*Knowledge of conditions and needs*—Community surveys "To discover neglected individuals and families, to ascertain the conditions which determine its (the Church's) work, and to learn what movements are entitled to its guidance, interest and support" (Vogt: *The Church and Country Life*, p. 117). Findings tabulated

and made public, avoiding any violation of private confidence.

*Cooperation between churches* in surveys and all community enterprises. We pledge our earnest desire and readiness for such cooperation in every possible way.

*Cooperation with other agencies*—the public schools, and all organizations or institutions working for the above or related ends. Public meetings in conjunction with such organizations, and active cooperation in service.

*Division of function with other agencies*—avoidance of overlapping and duplication of effort, by personal adjustment on the part of the individuals who are connected with both the church and the other agencies, and by confining the work of the church wherever some other agency is in the field to education, public encouragement and furnishing leaders and workers. Our pastor is the servant of the whole community; he will gladly participate in any enterprise for the public welfare, and the church gladly consents to such use of a reasonable portion of his time and efforts.

## V—WORLD SERVICE

We proudly recognize our position as not only a local organization, but a part of the great Presbyterian denomination and the whole church of Christ. We follow the methods and forms of organization of our denomination and of the great world-movements of the interdenominational or undenominational character (such as the Christian Endeavor).

*Gifts to Benevolences*—in church, Sunday school, and Christian Endeavor.

*Missionary Education*—in the pulpit, the Sunday school, the Young People's Society, Church Night and special conferences and institutes.

*Education in the work of the Board*—Sermons, literature, the Pastor's Instruction Class and special classes.

*Dedication of our sons and daughters and prayer for them.*

*Vocational Guidance*—through the pulpit, the home, the Sunday school and the Young People's Society.

## VI—ADMINISTRATION

*Form of Organization*—Established Presbyterian usage accepted, with the constant endeavor to follow the developing plans and recommendations of our great denominational agencies.

*Minister*—A regularly installed, full time, resident pastor, living in an attractive manse belonging to the church and located on the church grounds.

*Session*—The central governing body; regular monthly meetings; written reports from the heads of organizations, departments and committees.

*Congregational meetings*—Annually; reports on finances, projects, etc.; reports of committees, organizations, etc., as directed by the session; information for the whole congregation concerning the church's work, and opportunity for expressions of opinions and desires.

*Permanent Committees*—In charge of the chief departments of the work (e. g. the Council of Religious Education, The Committee on Evangelism, The Committee on the Demonstration Farm, etc.); regular written reports to the session.

*Special Seasons*—for concentrating the attention and effort of the church along specific lines, e. g. Evangelism.

*Cooperation with other churches and agencies for special projects*—through informal temporary groups, e. g.

committees from the organized Sunday-school classes, the Christian Endeavor or the session.

*Visitation*—of the whole membership and field systematically by the pastor, elders, Committee on Religion in the Home, and Home Department of the Sunday school for the purpose of cultivating Christian fellowship, discovering and keeping in touch with conditions and needs, and bringing spiritual and material aid; a Social Visitation of the whole congregation twice every year, following the plan of the Presbytery United Movement; surveys in connection with special enterprises.

*Financial Policy*—The Every Member plan, with budget, annual canvass, subscriptions for local church support and benevolences, weekly duplex envelop offerings as a regular part of the morning worship, quarterly statements from the treasurer for each subscriber, and regular reports to the session and the congregation, systematic preaching of the consecration of substance and information concerning needs and opportunities for giving.

### A PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, we commit ourselves and this plan of work to thee. It is thy work, and thou only canst give us the power to accomplish what we have undertaken. Bestow upon us now that power; whatever is misguided in our plans do thou overrule; whatever is lacking inspire us to supply. Above all, we beseech thee, give us that spirit of love for thee and for our neighbors which alone can put life into our work; and keep vivid before our minds and strong in our hearts the great purpose of all, that thy name may be hallowed, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in

heaven. In the name of thine Anointed, our Savior we ask it. AMEN.

A mere casual reading of this program will not meet the case. The author refuses to be satisfied with his reader if he does not now turn back and give this program a careful, prayerful step-by-step study, seeking to find in it suggestions that will help in launching a worthy comprehensive challenging program for his own church. Let us bear in mind always that a program is a "statement of ideals and plans for the future" and that it may require months and even years to bring the ideals set forth down to the practical realm of the real. But it has been true from the beginning of time that every practical achievement in the sphere of the real had its birth in the realm of the ideal.

It seems to me that if I were pastor of a country church I should master by careful study, the foregoing church program. I should then make such changes in it as would be necessary to adapt it to my local situation. I should then ask my church to adopt it as the program that the church would deliberately seek to carry forward in the community. I should then have a printed copy put into the hands of every member of the church and keep constantly before them the challenge to live up to that ideal.

It will not meet the case for the country preacher to say that this all looks pretty on paper but cannot be worked in actual practice. I have chosen and reproduced this particular program because it has worked in actual performance in an open country church. With necessary local adaptations and with the leadership of an intelligent and enthusiastic pastor it will work in any country church.

## CHAPTER IX

# A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

For many years President W. B. Bizzell of the Texas A. and M. College has been much interested in the welfare of the rural church. Being himself a Baptist deacon and a product of Baylor University, he has recognized intuitively that a State College can have no direct hand and certainly no authoritative or even modifying voice in the affairs of a church. As president of a State College he has all along maintained as axiomatic the idea that his college has no place in shaping either the theology or the polity of a church.

But he has at the same time very properly maintained that since the college is so directly concerned with rural life there should be some informal, non-official, and yet very sympathetic and practical cooperation between the agencies of the college and the various denominational Boards, believing that in this way each could be helpful to the other in the matter of developing a wholesome rural life.

In the summer of 1923, he wrote: "The church has the key to the most vexed rural problems.

"Since both the church bodies and the A. and M. College of Texas have definite responsibilities regarding country life, and since each has a peculiar contribution of its own to make toward the solution of the problems

confronting this field, it would seem the part of wisdom for them to counsel together, from time to time, as to the most effective means of reaching common ends.

"A feeling of need for the aid which the churches can give in making the country life program of the college the best possible, prompted the Texas A. and M. College to arrange for a Country Ministers' Conference at College Station, July 16-28, 1923, and for a series of institutes at various points in the State during the following weeks."

This conference was held according to announcement. As one of the results of its deliberations a committee was appointed to prepare an address to the people of Texas on this very vital subject. The report of this committee has been published as a Bulletin of the A. and M. College, and because of its many helpful suggestions I am, with the consent of the College, reproducing that bulletin verbatim in this volume. It is fair to say that most of the matter of this report was furnished by Dr. W. E. Garnett, being read and approved, of course, by the other four members of the committee. In my opinion it will amply repay thoughtful reading and even careful study. The report is as follows:

#### THE FUNCTION, POLICY AND PROGRAM OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH.

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*Report of the Committee of the Rural Ministers' Conference,  
A. and M. College of Texas, July 16-26, 1923*

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The Committee wishes at the outset to acknowledge its debt to the many contributors to the thought presented in this report.

The Committee began its work on the assumption that at present there are three aspects of the task of the country church in Texas that need stating:

1. A definition of the *function* of the country church, in order to gain if possible a clear notion of what the fundamental work of the church is, especially in relation to the activities of other social institutions and agencies.

2. An outline of a *general policy* for the country church as a whole in trying to carry out its function.

3. A suggestive *program*.

### *The Function of the Country Church.*

God's great purpose for men is the salvation and the highest possible development of each personality and of the human race as a whole. It is essential to this growth that men shall hold adequate ideals of character and life. The Christian believes that these ideals must spring from a clear appreciation of God's purpose, and from a consuming desire to reproduce the spirit and life of Jesus.

Therefore, the function of the country church is to create, to maintain, and to enlarge both individual and community ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the Christian motive and teaching; and to help rural people to inculcate these ideals in personal, in family, and in community life; in agricultural and industrial effort; in civic activities; and in all social relationships.

The church must bring men to God, must lead in the tasks of building God's Kingdom on Earth.

### *The Work of the Country Church.*

The Committee has divided the work of the country church into the following headings:

1. Knowledge of its field.
2. Preaching and worship.
3. Religious education.
4. The church ministering to all the people.
5. The church ministering to all the needs of the people.
6. Cooperation among the churches.

Under each one of these headings there is:

#### *1. A Statement of General Principles.*

Intended to apply to Christianity as a whole, or to any church. These principles are expected to be broad enough on the one



hand to meet the need of general religious activities, and on the other hand practical enough to serve as a guide for local church work.

## *2. A Program for the Local Church.*

This is by no means complete, but is a list of specific things that might be done by any church. Probably no one church will do all of them, but every church can do some of them. Each church should adapt its program to the needs and conditions of its own community; but should always test the program in the light of a broad policy.

In addition to the above, there are included in the report, suggestions to governing church boards, State conventions, associations, and conferences, which if adopted, would greatly facilitate the execution of the policies and programs herein outlined.

### **I. KNOWLEDGE OF ITS FIELD.**

#### *A. Principles.*

a. Country church leaders, both preachers and laymen, should have a clear understanding of the fundamental aspects of the rural problem, and should broadly define the relationship of the church to that problem.

b. The country church should make a survey of its field, to learn what movements are entitled to its guidance, interest, and support, to discover neglected individuals, families and fields of social effort, to ascertain the conditions which determine its work. Two or more churches serving the same community should cooperate in such a survey. The main results should be made public, but the rights of privacy should be duly guarded. In making such surveys, churches should cooperate with other institutions and agencies.

#### *B. Program for the Local Church.*

1. Hold county or district conferences of rural preachers to study rural problems.

2. Have county agents arrange for agricultural speakers before church gatherings.

3. Promote community surveys,—using standard survey blanks, such as those obtainable from several church boards, and the A. and M. College.

4. Encourage the study of survey results by the community. Support constructive plans for promoting desirable conditions and tendencies and checking undesirable ones as indicated by the community survey. Encourage all community organizations to cooperate in this work.

5. Urge the reading of literature bearing on country life. See to it that public libraries, church libraries, and school libraries have a good selection of books, bulletins, and magazines on this subject, and push actively their circulation.

Every country minister is especially urged to have the following:

1. Publications on country church work of his own Home Mission Board and similar publications by other denominational boards.

2. The following Texas A. and M. College publications:

a. Extension Service Bulletin B-64. "Ancient and Modern Agriculture." (Agricultural illustrations from the Bible.)

b. Annual report of the Director of the Extension Service.

c. List of publications of the Extension Service.

d. List of publications of the Experiment Station.

e. Rural Sociology circulars:

(1) No. 2. Socially Significant Rural Conditions.

(2) No. 3. A statement of what constitutes a well-rounded community and suggestions on community building.

(3) No. 4. Directions for an Educational Community Fair.

## II. PREACHING AND WORSHIP.

### A. Principles.

The country church should foster private and public worship of God. Through its preaching, it should bring a ringing spiritual message of salvation to the community, and interpret the gospel for the uplift of motive and the transformation and development of character.

In services and worship the church should inspire and inculcate ideals of righteousness, of charity of judgment, of social justice, and of social responsibility. On all occasions it should recognize and meet the responsibility of its obligations as a

leader and a promoter of harmonious, unified, constructive effort for community welfare along all lines.

*B. Program.*

1. Preaching every Sunday in every field.
2. Emphasis on congregational singing.
3. Topics and texts with rural setting and connected with local social conditions and problems.
4. Religious use of special days with applications to local environment: Harvest Home, Rural Life Sundays, Thanksgiving, and Mothers' Day.

III. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

*A. Principles.*

The country church should develop definite means of religious and moral education, which interprets personal and social duty in terms of rural life, and which applies what is learned in actual social service. To this end the pulpit, the home, the Sunday School, and church societies should definitely cooperate.

*B. Program.*

1. Graded Bible instruction for children adapted to the average country Sunday school.

2. Systematic adult Bible study with social implications emphasized.

Special unit short courses on applied Christian citizenship, family problems and child welfare studied by organized adult church groups, such as, Bible classes, missionary societies, and laymen's clubs.

IV. THE CHURCH MINISTERING TO ALL THE PEOPLE.

*A. Principles.*

While the country church should minister to the efficient and successful, to the end that it may mold the community through competent leadership, it should also minister with special zeal to the ineffective, the poor, and the degenerate; for they also belong to Christ. The rapidly increasing instability of the rural population lays upon the church the special duty of religious and social helpfulness to the tenant family and the hired man.

**B. Program.**

1. Encourage community service projects by church clubs and groups.
2. Utilize existing women's organizations for larger and more effective local service.
3. Give public advocacy to various forms of social service, such as clean-up days, community picnics, play festivals, town improvement, Arbor Day, beautifying the cemetery or the common, etc.
4. Preach the adequacy of the country as a life investment.
5. Make church sociables community affairs, if possible, welcoming all.
6. Avoid unnecessarily multiplying community groups through church institutional pride.

**V. THE CHURCH MINISTERING TO ALL THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE.****A. Principles.**

The country church should regard itself as the servant of the entire community, and should be deeply concerned with all legitimate interests and agencies of the community. It should give them support and promotion as there may be opportunity or need. It should suggest and inspire rather than instigate and supervise; but it may undertake any new service for which there is not other provision.

*Cooperation with Other Agencies.* The church should recognize a division of functions in the community, and should cooperate with other institutions and organizations. Such adjustments are made individually for the most part, but by public advocacy and by educational methods the church should exert its collective influence for all ends that help to upbuild the country.

*Governing church bodies* and the local minister should recognize that all agencies working for constructive community building are allies of the church and should receive the church's active cooperation. The county agent's contacts and attitude toward country life make him a valuable counsellor to the minister, and vice versa.

Experience has shown that success or failure in building the country church on a permanent basis is parallel with the suc-

cess or the failure of the economic and intellectual life of the community in which the church is located. The county agent is the key man to the economic situation, while the home agent, the county superintendent of schools, and local teachers have the key to the educational situation. If the minister and church members give these public service workers their cordial support and cooperation, they will at the same time be building permanency into their own religious work.

### B. *Program.*

Community movements should be aided by active cooperation or instigated as the need may be, for such ends as the following:

1. Temperance—wherever the community is suffering from intemperance or lawlessness; a campaign for law enforcement, Sabbath observance, etc.
2. Public health and sanitation.
3. Good roads.
4. Education for rural life and consolidated schools.
5. Intellectual development by means of libraries, lectures, reading circles, clubs, and similar agencies.
6. Better farming and better farm homes, with special stress upon the extension activities of Agricultural College and the State University.
7. Beauty of village, roadside and private grounds.
8. Celebration of religious and patriotic holidays, observance of old home week, and production of historical pageants.
9. Education of the people in vision, by preaching on community planning.
10. Establishment of a supervised social center or community house.
11. Local federation for rural progress and other community programs.
12. Promotion of cooperation among farmers in their production, buying and selling, for civic purposes, and for dealing with such questions as the tenancy problem.
13. Provision for public recreation.
  - a. The church must recognize that the tendency to play among all peoples is an instinct which can be guided into proper channels, or allowed to run riot. This play instinct affords the rural church an opportunity

to gather up wandering, aimless forces in the community and bring them into concerted action and unified effort, if the rural church and the rural school and other constructive forces will enter and assume control.

- b. The church can carry out a program of character building and community building through its own initiative and direction, or in cooperation with other agencies, by such forms of recreational life as:

- (1) Wholesome games.
- (2) Building up a community playground.
- (3) Community fellowship gatherings.
- (4) Community fairs.
- (5) Competitive athletics.
- (6) Competitive singing.
- (7) Fostering clubs for music, debate, reading.

## VI. COOPERATION AMONG THE CHURCHES.

### A. *Principles.*

The whole program of the rural church will remain at a standstill unless there is concerted and aggressive action on the part of the governing church bodies, the ministers, and the leading laymen of the church to the end: that a resident ministry be secured for country churches; that the rural ministry be adequately trained for well-rounded leadership in country communities; and that length of pastorates be increased through the provision of salaries commensurate with ability and service. When there is such concerted action, we can confidently expect an end to the ill-paid, ill-trained, thinly spread ministry with attendant handicaps to community cooperate effort.

Where the village or town church uses only a part of the time of the pastor, the contiguous open country churches should be encouraged to use the same pastor, thus giving solidarity of field.

The young people's societies of the town church should occasionally put on a fine program in the country churches and vice versa, both as a matter of encouragement and demonstration as well as for the cultivation of fellowship and mutual understanding.

B. *Program.*

1. Union meetings for religious purposes, song services, thanksgiving, etc.
2. Cooperative surveys.
3. Evangelistic campaigns on the cooperative basis, preceded by a survey and followed by effective organized work for development and growth.
4. Cooperation to promote the best *inter-racial* and social group relationship.
5. Union campaigns on moral issues like law enforcement.
6. Community projects for various forms of community welfare, school improvement, health improvement and recreation.
7. Cooperative boys' and girls' clubs.
8. Cooperative play festivals, Christmas trees, etc.
9. Cooperation in athletic contests.

## SUGGESTIONS TO GENERAL CHURCH BODIES.

A. *Principles.*

To the various church boards, State and district conventions, associations and conferences the following suggestions and recommendations are respectfully made:

It is the genius of Christianity to be concerned for the whole life of humanity. Religion is the oldest and most continuous rural institution, and therefore is charged with the greatest responsibility. It has the key to the solution of the most vexed rural problems.

The church has potentially the most efficient machinery for influencing the whole life of the community. If the church shows interest in the success of other worthy phases of community life, these in turn will show an interest in the church.

The highest success of the rural church depends upon the agricultural, economic, intellectual, and social progress of the country. The time has come for ministers and other rural life agencies and institutions to take council more frequently on the country church and rural life as a whole.

**B. Program.**

The following program is suggested:

1. Official approval of this report by various church boards, conventions, associations, and conferences.

2. Publications of the report, if officially approved, as a circular by each denomination, and circulation through regular denominational channels.

3. Supplying the State institutions with lists of its rural ministers by each denominational headquarters, in order that they may be sent literature on rural life subjects from time to time, also placing county agents and other rural workers on denominational mailing lists for their literature on country church questions.

4. Frequent mutual aid in district conferences; country life speakers on programs of church conferences, and church backing to rural life meetings sponsored by agricultural workers.

5. Attractive rural life exhibits at annual church conventions and conferences.

6. A more vigorous policy of information on rural problems through church papers. Prepare and distribute to each pastor pamphlets which tell stories of successful country churches in the denomination.

7. Appointment by each denominational body of representatives to an annual conference with agricultural workers to consider plans and means of mutual assistance in a constructive rural program.

The first of these conferences to be held at College Station, January 8, 9, 1924.

In making this report the committee wishes to emphasize the fact that rural workers of State institutions have no religious propaganda to put over, and in their activities in the country church field do not mean to interfere in any way with denominational views and denominational machinery. Their only purpose is to render such service as may be possible in their



legitimate sphere, which includes matters pertaining to more satisfying country life.

(Signed)      **JEFF D. RAY**, Chairman,  
Professor of Homiletics and Rural Church Work, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Seminary Hill, Texas.

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College Station, Texas.

**W. E. GARNETT**,  
Professor of Rural Sociology, Texas A. and M. College,  
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## CHAPTER X

# THE COUNTRY PREACHER AND HIS MATERIAL EQUIPMENT

In other parts of this volume emphasis has been laid upon the necessity of a better educated rural ministry. We have glanced, with confessed humiliation, at his embarrassment and inefficiency on account of his lack of intellectual equipment. But the material equipment which the country preacher is to have for his work is also of vital importance. Better material equipment is such a preeminent need in the work of the country preacher that we can well afford to give an entire chapter to its consideration.

The outstanding item of material equipment, of course, will be the church building.

While the situation is still far from satisfactory it is certainly true that in recent years there has been a marked improvement in the matter of country church buildings. If one wished to speculate as to the reason for this advance several things could be mentioned.

In the first place one might mention a new prosperity that has come to the farmer. He has more money than formerly on account of advance in prices of his products. If he replies that because of a corresponding advance in what he has to buy he has no greater net profit than formerly, the answer is that the statement is not true. The farmer does make more clear money now than he did twenty years ago. But even if he does not clear

more he receives three times as much money in return for his labor as he did then. And it is a well-known fact that a man with a \$2,000 gross income will give more money to his church than if he had a \$500 gross income though the net profits are the same.

But a second thing that has given a new impulse to rural church building is the new outlook due to travel. Due to the automobile and other improved methods of transportation the farmer travels more than formerly. In his journeyings he sees what other communities are doing in the matter of better church buildings, imbibes the spirit and imparts it to his own community. But another very potent influence making for better rural church buildings is the fact that our country churches are taking on new activities demanding better equipment. The modern movement for a graded Sunday school and for taking care of the social side of church life is demonstrating the inadequacy of the old one-room building and making an imperious demand for a new house adaptive to the new activities of the church.

But perhaps the most potent influence in this field is the interest taken in it and the intelligent work done for it by the various denominational boards. In 1915 the Methodist Episcopal Church established what they call a Bureau of Architecture. In 1920 the American Baptist Publication Society, together with the Baptist Home Mission Society, established a Department of Architecture. About the same time the Baptist Sunday School Board appointed Dr. P. E. Burroughs to give much of his time to the question of church architecture. The Presbyterians (U. S. A.), who are perhaps the pioneers in modern rural church activities, are giving special attention to this question of rural church architecture. Doubtless other denominations are or soon will be doing

the same work. All these agencies have published books and tracts and folders on the subject, and are prepared to furnish practically free suggested church plans to meet any situation. This intelligent and concentrated attention to the matter on the part of our denominational boards has resulted in a very perceptible revival of interest in better rural church buildings.

But, to take another step, let us consider some things that should characterize the country church building.

#### 1. Strength and Stability.

In the first place it pays. Our Catholic friends, with all their faults, set us a good business example in this matter. Whatever one may say of their style of architecture they at least build for permanence, and do not waste money on cheap flimsy temporary buildings. The Baptist meeting house at New Liberty, Kentucky (an open country church), was built in 1854, and is apparently as good now as the day it was built. It is true the modern church life has demanded the addition of some wings, but the original building seems good for another hundred years. Building a house like that was a far better investment than a cheaper affair that would have to be replaced two or three times in a generation.

But another reason for such a building is that it teaches a moral lesson. Let a group of young people grow up under the shadow of a permanent, well-built, stable house of worship, and unconsciously it will have its effect upon their character. Without knowing it they are influenced to set store by the things that are permanent. And furthermore, they are unconsciously led to regard religion as one of the permanent assets of life.

But besides being a good investment, and besides teaching a moral lesson, a strong, stable, dignified church building will be a drawing card to attract people

to all the services of the church. Other things being equal the church with such a building will be better attended than the one with a cheap temporary shack.

2. Beauty. Paraphrasing the words of a distinguished statesman, "Millions for defense, but not a cent for tribute," I recently heard a member of a church building committee say, "Thousands for utility, but not a cent for beauty." He was a fine man but wrong here. Certainly other needed qualities should not be sacrificed upon the altar of beauty, but that is the best house of worship, other elements being cared for, that is most characterized by beauty. A beautiful house of worship will have its wholesome influence upon the esthetic nature of every person in the community.

3. Utility. The test of utility for a church building would be one thing, while for any other building it would be quite another. A building that would be ideally useful as an opera house might, and no doubt would be, the abomination of desolation as a church edifice. In the matter of utility there are four things at least that every building committee should keep in mind. (1) The preaching service. The public preaching of the gospel is the preeminent task of the church. The first thought, therefore, of a building committee and architect should be that of a building with an auditorium in which the preacher can be easily seen and heard by all the people assembled. This would eliminate all posts and pillars, all nooks and crannies, all turns and angles, that would interfere with hearing and seeing the preacher. (2) The choir. Since gospel song is coming to have so large a place in our public worship it is a short-sighted policy to build a meeting house without adequate provision for the choir. In country churches it is difficult to get together a sufficient number of musi-

cal people to make a choir. To recognize their value enough to make some adjustment in the building by which the choir would be enabled to render its best service would be such an encouragement to the musically inclined that it would greatly help in the matter of recruiting a choir. As to the location of the choir, those who have given the matter most attention think it should be immediately behind the preacher, on a level with the pulpit floor, with each row a few inches higher than the one immediately in front. This is no doubt the best place for the choir, the one objection being that with churches practicing immersion it makes it difficult to arrange for a satisfactory baptistry. For this reason it seems to me that it would be best to have the choir platform to the right or left of the preacher. The one thing insisted upon is that rural church buildings shall be so constructed as to give formal and sensible recognition to the importance of the gospel in song. (3) The Sunday school. The twentieth century rural meeting house that does not make some definite provision for the needs of the modern Sunday school is regarded by thoughtful people as a travesty in architecture. It is freely admitted that country churches cannot, in many cases, make the elaborate provision possible in wealthier town churches, but it is certainly true that most of them could, and if they realized its importance, would make better provision for the teaching in the Sunday school. Every church building ought to provide at least five separate rooms for the Sunday school, viz: (a) an assembly room—(which may well be the church auditorium); (b) a room for beginners; (c) for primaries; (d) for juniors; (e) for intermediates. To this should be added as many classrooms as possible, providing as far as practicable separate classrooms for the classes in the Senior and Adult Depart-

ments. (4) Social life. It is to be hoped that the church will never degenerate into a mere party-giving, fun-making, lunch-serving institution. Let us hope that the church, will always be a great spiritual dynamo set for the serious business of saving souls and building character. But since man is by nature a gregarious animal—a creature of highly developed social instincts, the church is dim-eyed that does not see in this wide field an opportunity of service and as far as possible furnish physical equipment for it. How far a country church could go in this matter would depend upon a good many things, particularly its financial ability. But every country preacher ought to capitalize for Christ and his cause, the social instincts of his people, and he ought to utilize to this end every means that consecrated common sense could invent. If he could possibly do so he ought to have a community hall on the church grounds, preferably not a part of the church building, which might become a center of much of the social life of the community, and particularly of his own people.

4. Comfort. It is not an exaggeration to say that there are, or were, many people with the notion that the house of God ought not to be made comfortable, arguing that a good Christian ought to rejoice in the opportunity to suffer for Christ's sake. These friends did not have discrimination enough to see that to suffer for Christ's sake, and to be a fool for the want of sense are two very different things. Intelligent people are now coming to the belief that the house of God ought to be not only the most attractive but the most comfortable building in the neighborhood. In the first place it should have light. The average country church does not suffer for want of light by day. That abomination is reserved for city churches. Where the country church falls down is in

the matter of illumination for night meetings. There are so many new methods of making real lights that a church is almost criminal if it persists in using the old kerosene lamp.

A second necessity to comfort is ventilation. A church building, especially in the South, should have all the Southern exposure possible and as many windows as possible in the South side. This is particularly true where electric fans and other artificial methods of ventilation are impracticable. This question should be carefully considered when deciding what shall be the position of the house on the lot. I visited a church not long since where one of the deacons, showing me through the building, boasted in a semi-jocular way that the house was "*built* without clerical interference." I said, "I thought so. If a preacher had planned it he would at least have had enough judgment to provide some openings on the south side of the auditorium."

A third thing is heat. In my early days I attended a church which had been worshipping in a house for twenty-five years in which there had never been a fire, having not even a flue for a stove-pipe. The brethren made a log fire out in front of the house. The congregation stood around that till the parson was ready to preach and all went in and shivered through the service. I never heard of anybody being especially blessed on those cold days. The old-fashioned stove is not a very satisfactory way to heat a church building. Those who are near it "burn up," and those who are remote "freeze." It does not matter much in what part of the room you place it, you will wish you had put it somewhere else. Near the platform, under the preacher's nose is perhaps the most common, and at the same time, the most abominable place to put it. Steam, or hot water, or even hot air



heat is impracticable in most country churches. But there are many modern methods of distributing the heat over a large room, the price of which would be within the reach of any average country church. No heating device ought to be installed in a country church till the most thorough investigation of modern methods has been made. It would be well to take the matter up with the architectural department of one of the leading denominations. These people have all the latest information on the subject.

A fourth thing desired for comfort is water—running water in the building. This is not as impracticable as it seems. If a shallow well can be had in the church lot a windmill and metal cistern will more than supply the demand. Or if the well is impracticable the metal cistern fed with rains from the roof of the church building will furnish "much water." This running water in the house idea is especially important to those denominations which would desire to have a baptistry in the building.

Having said this much about the country church building let us think for a moment of some things that ought to go along with it.

*Coordinate equipment.* (a) A well-kept lawn. It cannot be a very wholesome recommendation of religion to see a church lawn looking like a dumping ground. A little united effort wisely directed would not only rid the lot of unsightly debris, but would in a short time beautify it with trees and shrubs and flowers. (b) A sign easily seen and read from the road, telling the name and denomination of the church. How many times has the reader of this line passed a country church and wished in vain to know its name and denomination? I have seen thousands of country churches but I have never yet

seen one with enterprise enough to put out a sign that even the passing stranger might know who it was and what it was. (c) A pastor's home. A country church, if it ever expects to have full-time preaching and a resident pastor must, almost of necessity, have a pastor's home. This is more important in the country than in the city. In town houses are built to rent. Not so in the country. A decent house for rent, apart from the farm land, in the country is a rarity. Often the preacher would move on his field, but he can get no house to live in. My observation is that a country or village church with a decent pastor's home has little trouble getting a good pastor located on the field, and that those without such equipment find locating a preacher on the field impracticable if not impossible. (d) A bit of "Mother Earth." The country church ought not to be satisfied with a quarter of an acre of ground, more or less, donated by some brother from the corner of his field. The ideal modern country church will have not less than five, and preferably ten, acres of ground. The rural pastor's home will demand considerable ground for chickens, pigs, cow, garden and even a little feed for stock. Beside this there will be needed space for parking conveyances. Beside this why should not the church furnish ground for the athletic sports of its young people—thus creating a point of contact between the church and the growing youth. (e) A Ford. In my youth everybody knew that a country preacher could not do his work unless he had a pony to ride. If I did not have one, and was not able to buy one, the church managed some way to get one for me. The Ford car is the twentieth century country preacher's pony, without which it is a practical impossibility for him to do his work. When the meeting house and the pastor's home are built the budget

should call for a garage with a Ford in it ready to greet the pastor on his arrival.

But some country deacon reading this chapter is saying, "That is all a beautiful theory. The trouble is the theorizing parson is asking us to bite off more than we can chew." But let us see about that? Of course, it cannot all be done in a minute. If a man is going to eat a juicy beefsteak he does not take it all in his mouth at once. The bane of our country churches is that they are not led to fix a great program and work to it. They live from hand to mouth with a skip-hop-and-jump program that has no eye to the future and cannot, therefore, make intelligent, consecutive, permanent progress. But what is this supposedly impossible thing I have proposed? Here it is. (1) Ten acres of ground centrally and accessibly located. (2) A meeting house with reasonable equipment for a modern Sunday school and the other activities of a church. (3) A building hard by for the social life and general community service of the church. (4) A comfortable pastor's home. (5) An open field providing equipment for the athletic sports of the young people. Everything there, including brick veneer for all the buildings, can be provided at an expense of from \$15,000 to \$20,000. The increase in the value of land in the community growing out of a plant like that would more than offset the cost of it. For frame buildings \$10,000 will cover the cost. If anyone doubts that let him take it up with the Architectural Bureau of his denomination. These people have given the matter such intelligent study that they have worked out plans thoroughly adequate and surprisingly economical.

My final earnest plea with our country churches is that when they decide to build they do not put up the first thing that happens to come into the mind of some

good farmer who knows little or nothing about the needs of a modern church. But rather let them turn to their denomination's Bureau of church architecture, state their case, and get free, sympathetic, expert advice from men whose business it is to give this question constant, undivided, religious study.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

In order that rural ministers and lay church leaders may read more extensively in the field of rural social problems which have a direct bearing on the church, the following carefully selected list of books and tracts is appended. Any of these books may be secured at publishers prices through any local book store. Some of the very best material on rural church work is not in books, but in bulletins published by the various denominational home mission boards and by the agricultural colleges; so these also are listed and strongly recommended. All of the government and College bulletins and most of those by denominational boards can be secured without cost simply by writing to the appropriate bodies.

### *Books Directly Related to Church Work.*

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